

KILL ROCK STARS • INSIDE THE "NEW" ECONOMY • THE EXPLOSION • ABORTION ACCESS • MARY TIMONY

PUNK PLANET MAGAZINE

\$3.50

Issue #39 • September/October 2000

IN 1994

GREEN DAY MADE IT BIG.

JAWBREAKER, THE SMOKING POPES, JAWBOX, SAMIAM,
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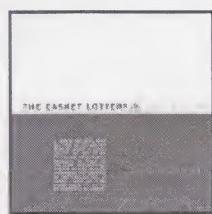


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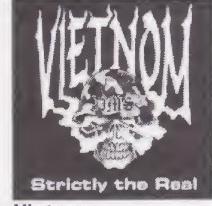
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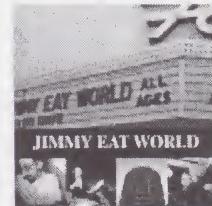
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Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type?

the risks

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disclaimer

"

just want to make sure that we're not posing for a slam job."

It was a legitimate concern, and I had been laboring for about 15

minutes already to explain to Billie Joe that my intentions in putting Green Day on the cover of this magazine were pure—or at least mostly pure.

"I do have to admit that in terms of magazine sales it makes more sense to have Green Day on my cover than Schleprock," I confided. We both laughed and finally, he agreed. But, he added, "I still am not convinced that I'm not being lied to. I've been lied to so many times at this point..."

Here I was, trying to convince someone that had received virtually nothing but grief from the punk scene in the last six years that *Punk Planet* wanted to put his band on the cover. And no matter what I said, he still figured that he was setting himself up for yet another crack at him and his band. It was sad, but I could understand his misgivings.

One of the more telling moments in our conversation was when Billie Joe said, "You do realize that you're going to get a lot of heat for this." Indeed, I'm sure we will.

Our cover story, "The Crash," documents one of, in author Kyle Ryan's words, "the most bizarre eras in the independent scene." It follows eight of the bands that signed to major labels following the success of Green Day in 1994. Their stories are varied, but they all result in the same thing: nothing. While Green Day achieved fame and fortune on a major label, for everyone else, it amounted to little more than fools gold.

The reactionary among the punk scene were quick to jump on these bands case, calling them "sellouts," decrying slight changes in the bands sound as proof positive

of the evils of major labels, and polarized the scene to the point where now even mild success on even an independent label is met with the "sellout" war cry.

I should know. I was among those leading the charge back then. *Punk Planet* was born during the thick of the whole drama, and we certainly tossed barbs towards many of the bands that were signing to majors.

But six years later, all of us here at *Punk Planet* felt it was time to revisit this era and reassess it. Were the critic's cries of major labels destroying the punk scene founded in reality? I think that's a pretty easy one to answer. All I have to do is look at the piles of ads to paste up, or the crowds of people waiting to get into Chicago's Fireside Bowl for a show on a Friday night to know that the death of the punk scene at the hands of the majors was highly overrated.

But what about the critics' warnings of the evils of major labels? That's a much more difficult question to answer. As Kyle writes in his introduction, "If you think you know what happened, think again."

That era changed the landscape of punk forever. It's about time we look around and see where we were and where we are without jumping to too-simple conclusions. I feel that Kyle's story does exactly that. Enjoy it—it's an unbelievably good read.

One last thing: "The Crash" is by no means the end-all be-all document of that era. Many more bands signed contracts than we had space for in this issue. To all those bands that may feel slighted, or want to share their experiences, I urge you to write a letter in.

And finally, to Billie Joe, I hope you can believe me now.

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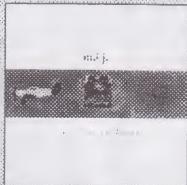
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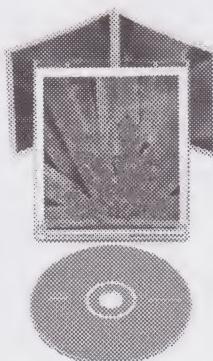
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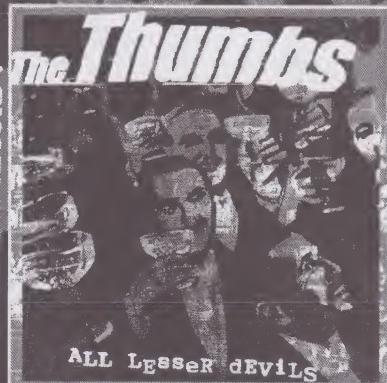
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#4 - July 2000

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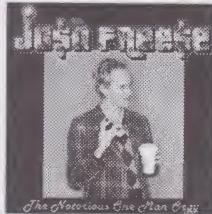
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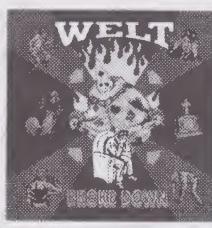
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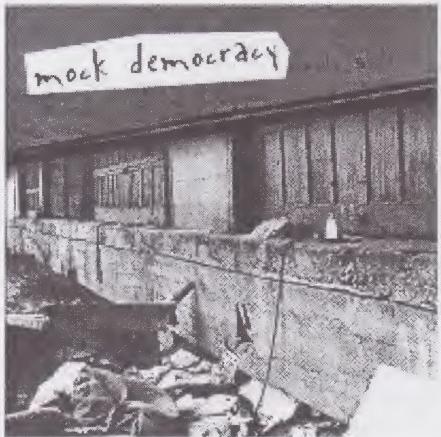


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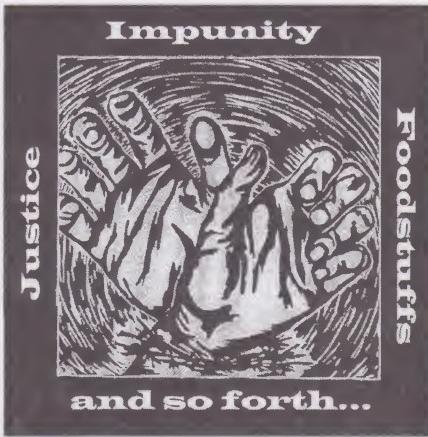
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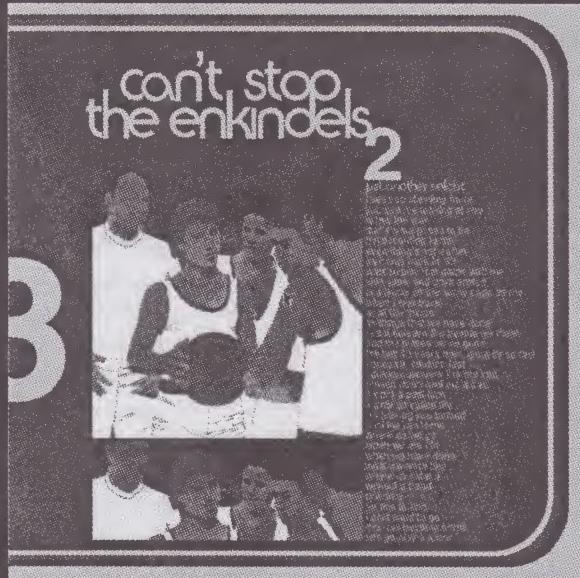
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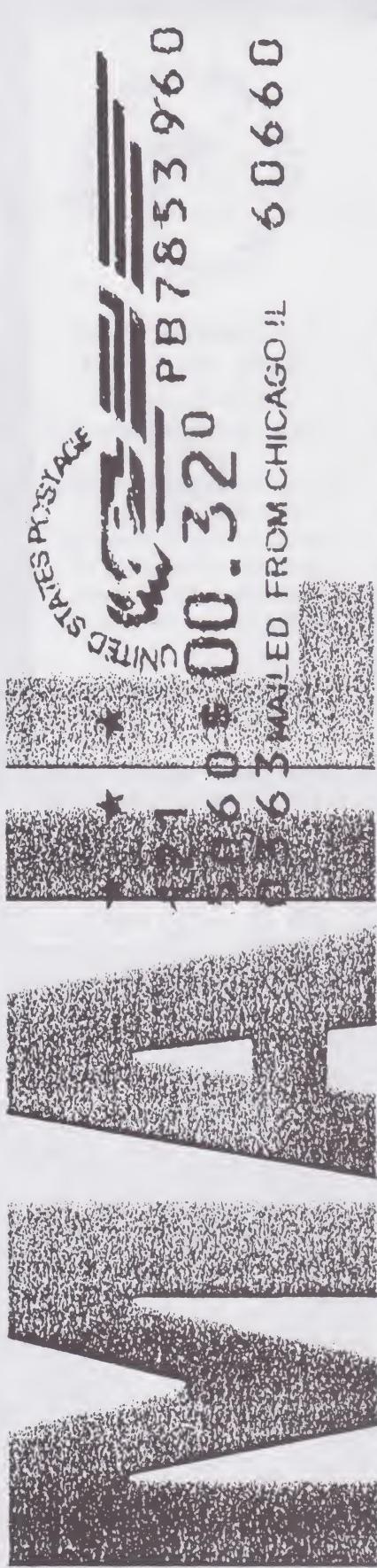
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It's Bigger than Hip-Hop

Punk Planet—

Admittedly, I'm not a regular reader of *Punk Planet*. However, I'm writing to say I appreciated your piece on the growth of political hip-hop ["Housequake," PP38]. Unfortunately, writer Aaron Shuman engages in the verbal backhanding of hip-hop's Afrocentric "golden era" all too common in the mainstream and "alternative" media. While it is easy to leap on, it's not accurate or correct.

Shuman writes: "The first Nation of hiphop [sic] was a weak house, undermined by conflicts of race, gender and sexuality, then [sic] the new Nation don't intend to go out like that. With an emphasis on knowing one's roots, on human rights that transcend civil rights, and a commitment to collective- and consensus-based organizing, the groups being built promise a strong house indeed."

The term "hip-hop nation" has been used since the movement's early days to refer primarily to African and Latino youth around whom the music, culture and politics emerged and, despite attempts to paint otherwise, still resides. Primarily — and still today — the music, culture and politics embody the unique struggles and experiences of people of color in America. White kids can identify with that, say they're "down" with it, or attempt to adopt the nation for themselves, but the culture developed in great part to address the feelings of disenfranchisement experienced by people of color.

The first "Nation of hiphop" [read: late '80s, primarily Black and Afrocentric] was, in fact, hardly as wracked by "conflicts of race, gender and sexuality" insofar as the unity demonstrated by the Zulu Nation, Stop The Violence Movement, Intelligent Black Women's Coalition and numerous community groups that spoke out on behalf of our civil and human rights as people of color and of the oppression we experienced. Clearly, with any cultural movement there are struggles, but the first Nation faced its fiercest enemies in the primarily white-dominated media, which hyperanalyzed and misrepresented everything from the work of Public Enemy to the fear of the violent Black male epitomized by FBI interference against N.W.A. over "Fuck Tha Police." Undermined by issues of race? Only insofar as the onslaught of establishment media criticism did its work in

attempting to tear down and demonize the rightful African-led protest to a genocide that was going on, and continues, against people of color in this country.

Additionally, the sneering posits of "emphasis on knowing one's roots" (implying the first Nation didn't know theirs); "human rights that transcend civil rights" (ignoring the fact that, as cases like Amadou Diallo's illustrate, while Shuman's Nation may have forgotten civil rights, the rest of us realize our civil rights are still threatened and their defense goes hand-in-hand, as MOVE pointed out, with the movement for human rights); and "a commitment to collective- and consensus-based organizing" (more left buzzwords than any real knowledge of how groups like the Zulu Nation operate) are simply laughable abstractions. In his essay "The White Negro," Norman Mailer wrote of "a new breed of adventurers who drifted out at night looking for action with a black man's code to fit their facts." Do some research.

Today, writers like Shuman are not alone in trying to discredit the efforts of the "first Nation" in their quest to promote the 'new' Nation.

The concept of the hip-hop nation has been expanded to include all races and ethnicities, primarily by profiteering record companies and those looking to benefit financially from a whitewashed image. Many so-called hip-hop magazines look to move issues and writers look to get paid for hack jobs in the quest for the rainbow Nation. While this is indeed a pleasant image, it attempts to negate the work of pioneers in building a culture of resistance that is the basis for hip-hop by making outlandish, often misleading, claims. Obviously, whites and others are not exempt from experiencing problems and disillusionment, but African people and Latinos, for the most part, continue to live at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale, are the majority of the prison population and internees of the criminal justice system, and confront racial prejudice that impacts employment, housing and educational opportunities. To pretend our experiences in building the Nation Shuman vilifies as having implicitly "gone out like that" is troubling, not to mention false.

Ernesto Aguilar
Radio Sexto Sol

To Serve and Protect Who?

Dear Punk Planet—

Kudos to Kari Lydersen for compiling a truly informative article, breaking the artifice of the "to serve and protect" facade of the police department in our country ["War on the Streets" PP37].

My father is a retired police officer of 25 years. As children, he would tell my sister and I whimsical tales of drug busts and car chases; locking up the bad guy and throwing away the key. As docile children, we were conditioned to seek refuge in the police, and view them as the embodiment of altruism. Never would we second guess their intentions. Yet as we grow, we learn. We experience. We understand. Through this experience and understanding, it is quite easy for me to make a sweeping generalization regarding the police in America. I truly believe that men and women enter the force for either vindictive or idealistic reasons. Once that man or woman has adapted to that societal position of power, those once held idealistic intentions quickly vanish, or become tainted by the corruption encroaching them.

As I grew, my father's stories transformed from light-hearted tales to gritty accounts. He would nonchalantly recall the time when he would drop a drunk "spic" in a "nigger" neighborhood "to let them have at him." Or perhaps the time my father and his partner beat a drunken man so badly with their flashlights, they left him bleeding on the streets, afraid of the punishment for their actions. "Things have changed...." my father often reminisces "in the good old days we used to just shoot cop killers, now they run them through the system." These are the words of my father, America's finest, hired to serve and protect.

What is it about this role in our society that can deteriorate a human, a loving father, to the point of immorality? One begins to serve their self interests, feed their racism, and redefine laws. They are reduced to pure animal instinct and act according to their vengeful passion. How frightening is it that "police brutality" and "injustice within the system" have become conventional household names? There is an acrid poison that is flowing through the police departments. This poison of privileged power instills within them the lust to torture, beat, kill, and eventually justify. To always somehow justify.

There is never a resolution to the heated debates that my father and I constantly find ourselves in. We can merely provide each other with our own perspectives. Perspectives which either strengthen our own beliefs, or perhaps instill empathy within us toward the other's view. I am not a police officer, I never will be. And for this reason I suppose I can never truly understand my father's perspective. However, I do know that it is my father who prompted me to know my rights, affiliate with my local Copwatch chapter, and spread awareness to break the myth surrounding the police. I encourage each of you to do the same.

I find that I am no longer afraid of the drug dealers, the thieves, the gang members or the molesters. I find myself more frightened of those men and women who are in the police, wallowing in that position of power, and hired to serve and protect... their own interests.

Aubrey Edwards
Austin, Texas

The West Memphis Three

Greetings all at Punk Planet,

Thanks for your coverage of the incident involving Brian Deneke ["Death in Texas, PP36]. It's important that people be made aware of this tragedy. However, while Brian has been getting a lot of attention, I've noticed that the "West Memphis Three" have been completely ignored by the punk community.

If you don't already know, they are three guys convicted for the brutal murders of three little boys in Arkansas. After watching two documentaries about it, it's become painfully clear that these boys were framed by an inept police force and convicted by ignorant hick jurors, mainly because they were metalhead outcasts who "wore black all the time." Two have received life in prison and the third, Damien Echols, has been sentenced to death. I would hate to think this case has been overlooked simply because these guys aren't punk rockers.

I'm urging you to spread some awareness about this case. You can check out information at www.wm3.org for more information. Anything you can do to help would be appreciated, not just by me but surely by the three boys whose lives have

been ruined by the corruption and ignorance of their "community."

Thanks for your time,

Chris
San Francisco, CA

Globalize This!

Punk Planet—

While I appreciate the optimism of "Life With Larry," [Columns PP37] the idea of blaming those with anti-social behavior for the strength of the right wing is less than edible: it's like blaming a runaway for his parent's abusive behavior. On the surface, yes, many will vote for harsher sentences and tougher policing in the face of visible street crimes (blue collar) but these are simply a response to the increase of less concrete, or invisible, crimes (white collar), within which I would like to include the simple and pervasive buying of the world's air, water, etc., etc., an effect of which is the rampant interruption of the natural state of our bodies and minds; for example, our current inability to breathe clean air or walk more than a short distance without seeing an advertisement for something or another—a sort of vague white collar crime which can lead directly to the blue collar crime of graffiti. If the alternative to fighting this corporate onslaught is to sit back and let the offenders believe there is no fight left in the victims, then I'll take a pass. The author suggests that changing the world begins with self-improvement, during which "marching is sometimes necessary," and gives the heartfelt Seattle protest credit only for having "inconvenienced the WTO for a day or two," while in reality it has become a rallying cry for many that We Can Do It. The author may be correct (though many would disagree) in saying that there is no "reality-based method for managing the challenges and crises of globalization," but this in fact proves the movement's sincerity: Reality is too fucked up! If there was a reality-based method, then it would be fucked up too! I applaud this movement for thinking irrationally in a world which, from birth, forces you into "reality" ideals such as fear and oppression. Quite simply, if reality were so pretty, there wouldn't be a need for the author's column in the first place.

David Halperin
New York City

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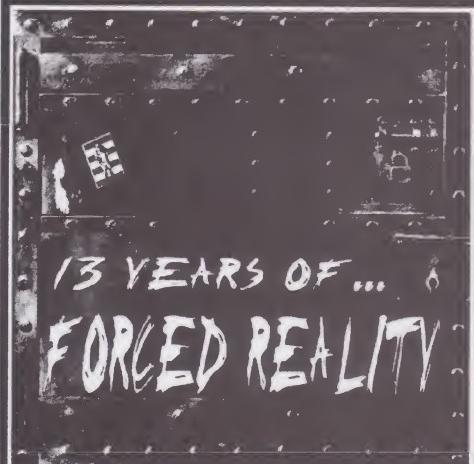
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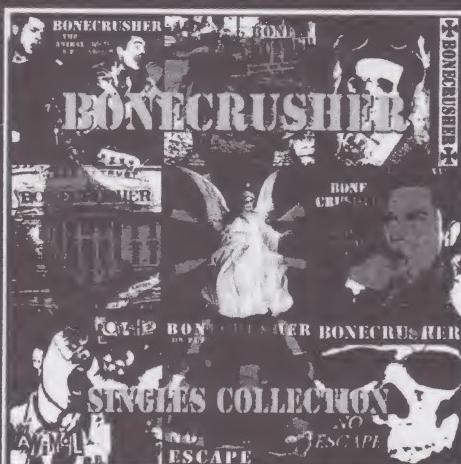


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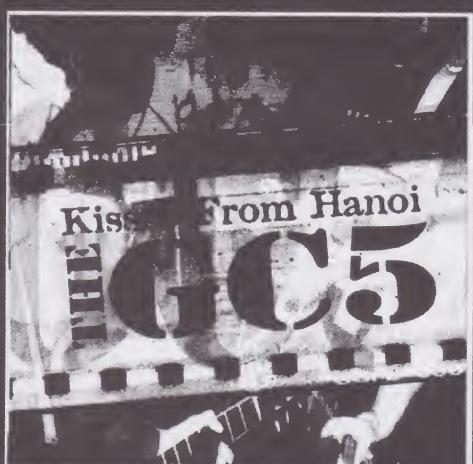
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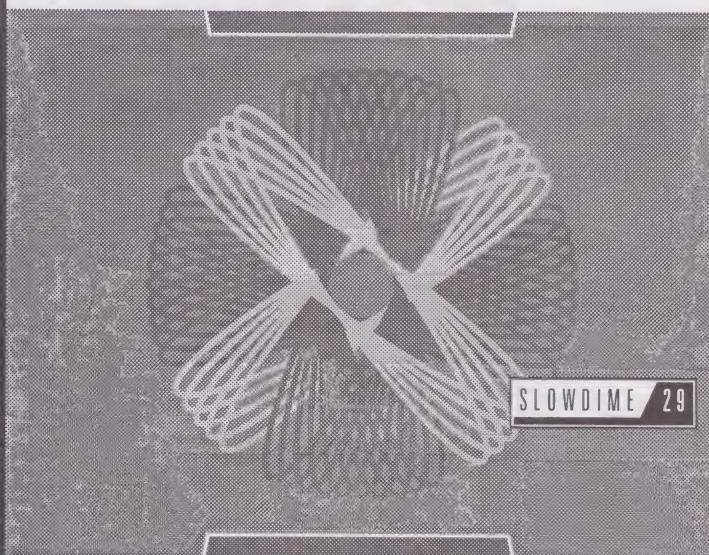


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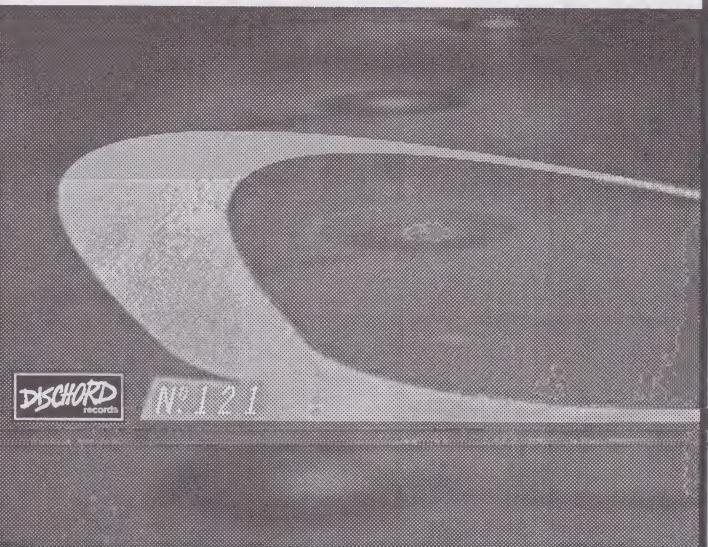
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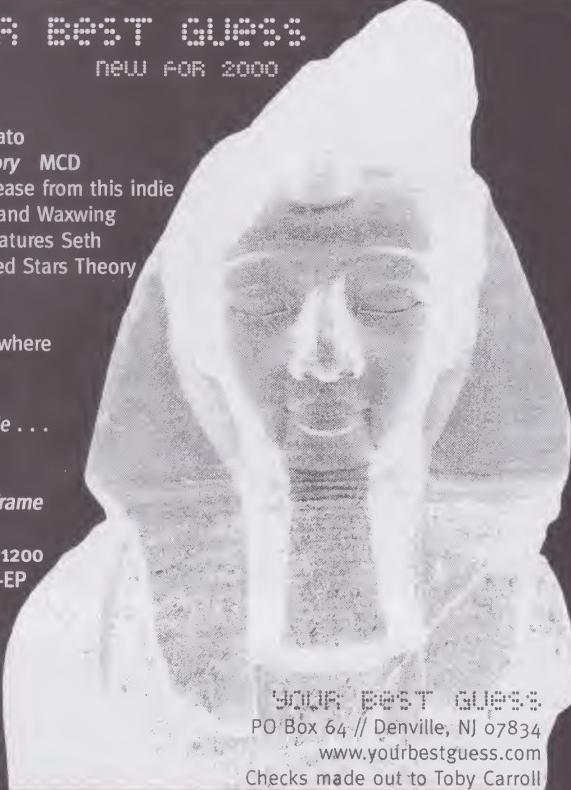
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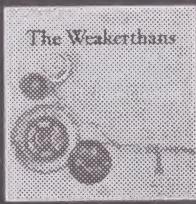
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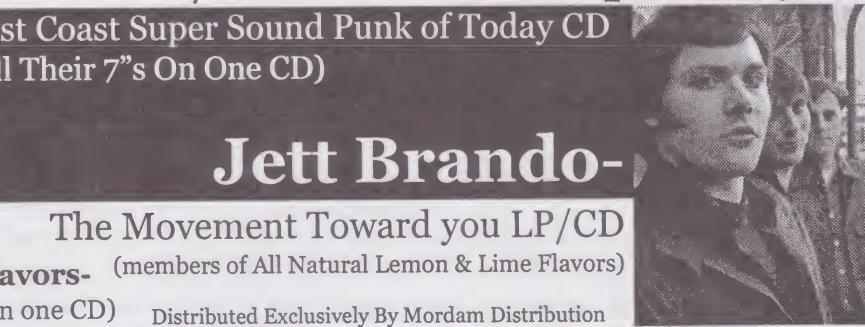
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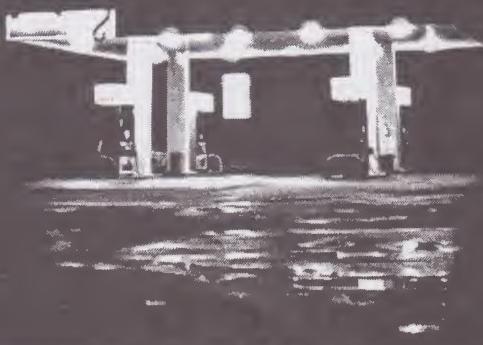


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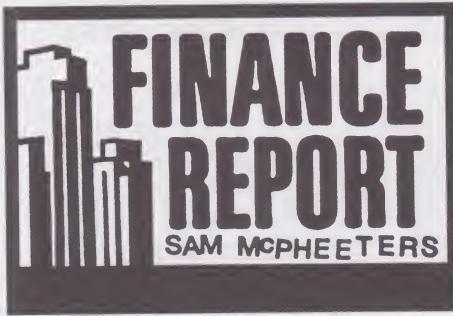
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ing Miss America and talking about running for president. Now Fruit Of The Loom, the company he ran, is in tatters." Could any word have brought such joy to my life as just this one little "tatters?" As with sports copy, good color commentary's the thing in business journalism. Would any future financial failure tale I read over the next year, I wondered that morning, be able to make me as happy as these two sentences?

Turns out I didn't have to wait long. At lunch, leafing through *The Los Angeles Times* and holding no expectations for any juicy tidbits, I stumbled quite innocently across the words "Iridium LLC" and "cratered" in the same headline. Some background: "Iridium" is the chemical element found in traces of platinum ore, supposedly brought to this planet 65 million years ago on the back of a dinosaur killing meteor. "Iridium LLC" was the corporation that built the world's only global wireless phone network not two years ago—rendering it possible, for the first time in history, to call anywhere on the surface of the planet from anywhere on the surface of the planet. I remember that day in the fall of 1998 with a familiar flush of awe-struck unease, accustomed as many of us now are to the staggering pace of technological development in the last decade.

This one story seemed to sum much of the screwy, dizzying pace of the new economy, the chilling triumph of the one multinational entitled above all others to the overused image of a swelling globe on their corporate literature. As it turns out, Iridium the company has not fared well. "Imploded," went the color commentary. Their initial five billion dollar investment came bundled with breathtaking pressures for "results"—in this industry's case, a fully operational system up and running a year

Viking Funerals

From *The New York Times* business pages, St. Patrick's Day 2000: "A few years ago, William F. Farley was dat-

before any of a half dozen competitors. They came through, more or less, on schedule...66 satellites in a low Earth orbit "constellation" by late '98. But, as with any business, general laws of physics dictate that quality control declines the quicker production is paced. These folks were cranking out a new satellite every five days. And any design calling for total planetary coverage will be more complicated (meaning: more expensive) than a traditional communications satellite system. Unlike normal sky-to-ground relays, these satellites had to talk to each other, networking which begat larger onboard computers, which begat backup computers, which begat increased memory and extra sets of antennae and finer degrees of positioning and increased thruster burns, which requires fuel, which requires money, and so on and so forth. Hundreds of engineers, managers, and ground staff were complicit in a vast orgy of spending that spanned the '90s. Business partner Motorola shouldered the initial investment, but damages had to surface somewhere. By the time of Iridium's debut, infrastructure costs had translated into hissy \$7 a minute calls on \$2,800 brick-shaped telephones. Subsequently, of the one million subscribers needed to just break even, Iridium never signed up more than 50,000. The revenue from their "global citizen" constituency of oil rig workers, container ship captains and arctic surveyors didn't even cover interest payments on the initial bond. By March 2000, only 19 months in, the company's finances had ceased "plummeting" and were officially "cratered"

A typical bankruptcy story. Yukks aplenty when it happens to someone else, but also loaded with sobering lessons for businesses of all sizes & stripes. For example, as a self-employed person I was able to extrapolate the following for my own company: 1) Set realistic deadlines (and if anyone from Mordam is reading, this terrible tragedy has at least taught me this much), 2) stay current (Iridium's business concept dated from 1987 technology) 3) Do not try to "brand" your product, in the way that "Pepsi" is a name-brand, if your product turns out to be a \$2,800 brick-shaped telephone, 4) Customers don't like getting gypped on service. (Only 6 months into Iridium's operations and already 3 months into their cash crunch, Iridium was rewarded for giving

ISP39

away free phones to journalists in Kosovo with irrevocable public relations fallout when the phones failed to work indoors). Not typical to this timeless tale is the irrevocable physical fallout—most companies don't leave behind 50 tons of flaming space debris to rain down on the planet when they file Chapter 11 (although I certainly wish mine could, at least for extra bargaining power with certain creditors). The night before Saint Patrick's Day, a final corporate buyer declined to step up, and a federal bankruptcy court judge, barring any other "white knight" by midnight, EST on March 17, decreed that Iridium LLC would be liquefied, its remaining employees cast free to wander the Earth, its 66 satellites—\$5 billion in hardware—"de-orbited", their thrusters set to gently nudge downwards into fiery oblivion.

None of this should serve as an indictment of satellite phones as a concept. Future orbital systems won't do a damn thing to stop the two ladies sitting at the table next to you from holding separate conversations at top decibel on their matching sapphire blue Nokia 5190's with earbuds, but satellite systems are somewhat blameless when it comes to the second worst infraction of the wireless age—those tactless aluminum cell phone towers that've been mandatory for every US county since the 1996 Federal Telecommunications Act (out here in LA county I spot them from the freeway, preposterously straight palm trees with metal prongs jutting under the fronds). Although, for the time being satellites are dependent on local, cellular installations. Orbiting systems may also be our best bet for increased privacy, at least in this country. Last March the European Council of Ministers met to update the 1995 "Legal Interception of Telecommunications Resolution" to allow Euro law enforcement to listen in on all Iridium calls without a court order, lest "terrorists" figure out that fully private conversations could be had for a mere \$7 a minute. (Ironically, it was the European Parliament that started making waves only last September over Echelon, the NSA-ANZUS spying network that is reportedly able to intercept, record, and translate any electronic communication—phone, fax, email, telex or terrestrial cellular. Both Echelon and the LIT Resolution have the same goal, however—legal eaves-

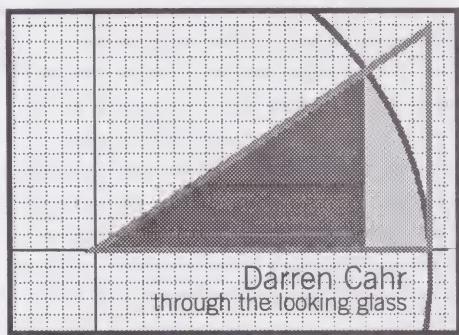
dropping of Americans farmed out to our allies, since it has been illegal for the CIA or any other US agency to spy on their own citizens since the Foreign Intelligence Service Act of 1978).

Yet Iridium was special. Pomp, squander and hubris were signal traits of the '90s bull market, and from day one this company's sales antenna was hailing all three. Marketing plans called for lasers to beam the company's logo onto cloud banks over major cities. CEO's started referring to Iridium as a nation after the International Telecommunications Union assigned it a unique country code for dialing. Great woo was pitched to the US military (and the Pentagon did buy 800 units, raising the obvious question—why didn't Iridium just charge a quarter million a phone and stay afloat?). This was history's first de facto planetary monopoly, a company technologically powerful enough to interfere with, by a factor of 100 to 1, the cosmic signals studied by radio astronomers. Their satellites were actually visible at night as "iridium flares," 10 to 30 second flashes of sunlight glinting off orbiter bows, brighter in certain latitudes than all other night sky objects but the moon. "Don't write Iridium off," said an in-house consultant after the first quarter 1999 losses, "It's a bit like Iridium is this big tanker in the ocean...it takes a while for the vessel to turn." Anyone with the nerve to make maritime analogies under such circumstances deserves all the icebergs they get.

And what of that falling space junk? After deorbiting, there will still be around 3,500 satellites in various strata, another 8,649 man-made objects tracked by U.S. Space Command. The earth's atmosphere eventually flushes down and incinerates all low-Earth-orbit debris, but some pieces make it through. This past May, several large chunks of a DOD rocket rained down on two South African farms. Any surviving fragment, even the size of a bullet, has the destructive capabilities of, well, a bullet. To claim that Iridium's posting of a "deorbiting bond" to cover the \$30-\$50 million destruction of all satellites represents some sort of "act of good corporate citizenship," according to one outgoing exec, "lest the craft become part of the thousands of bits of orbiting junk that could get in the way of working satellites" is like handing out plaques to atomic plant agencies for properly storing

their wastes. These people created the problem, and this is the best they can do?

Motorola has yet to destroy these satellites. Turns out a final decision doesn't come down until July 31. There are two prospective buyers lurking in the wings. I've slogged through many disgruntled Iridium stockholder chatrooms and no one has any idea how the system could possibly be made profitable at this point. Smart money stays on flaming death from space (one extant Iridium satellite will remain propped up on display at the Smithsonian, a warning to future generations). Nor is that front going to get anything but messier. Son Of Iridium is already in the works; Teledesic, the \$9 billion, 280+ satellite system planned for 2004. Funded by Bill Gates and several Saudi princes, among others, this is a little scheme to provide two way video and voice communication by satellite Internet service to everyone on Earth. But half the Earth's population has never made a phone call and earns less per capita in a year than what even the cheapest of handsets will cost. How exactly will this system pay for itself? Who will float the bonds to remove this junk in 2006? Query unknown. System error. "Teledesic," remarked a former competitor, "is the kind of thing that James Bond used to have to stop".



that he's 8 months old, the most important question about his forthcoming life is now upon me:

What instrument will he play in the band.

Oh, this is crucial. The fact of the matter is that the personality of a drummer is quite different from the personality of a bass player, or a lead guitar player, or a rhythm guitar player, or a lead singer. The instrument he plays could determine his future life. This is not a decision to take lightly.

The breakdown is like this:

DRUMMER: Usually insane. Generally marked with an unidentifiable odor that precedes their arrival by as much as half an hour. Often beset with serious "control" issues. Often the band member with the most tattoos, and (not coincidentally) the band member most likely to die in a bizarre gardening accident. The fact that Animal (on the Muppet Show) was a drummer was not a coincidence. Drummers were born under the zodiac sign representing Thorazine. They are armed and dangerous. In every band that I've ever played in, the drummer was thisclose to losing his mind during every song. Which is the way it should be. Examples of the type

include Tommy Lee, Keith Moon, and that kid down the street who your mom wouldn't let you play ping pong with because he took the game too seriously. Ian will not, by choice, be a drummer, though it is questionable whether anyone becomes a drummer by "choice." People are just born to drum, or not.

BASS: As a bass player myself, I can confidently say that bass players are articulate, well adjusted, and the rock that holds bands together. They are, of course, solid citizens and rarely have ego issues. They always do what's best for the band and rarely cause problems. The fact that few bass players can sing while playing the bass helps matters enormously—no matter how big their ego is, the fear of sounding like Geddy Lee can be paralyzing. Ian can become a bass player, though it would be easier to jam with him if he plays something else.

LEAD GUITAR: Pure ego. The connection between masturbation and lead guitar was not lost on early punk innovators, and many of them simply removed the "lead guitar" convention entirely. With few notable exceptions (such as Television, for example) it is a convention better left alone. I just have one word which should adequately explain the whole lead guitar thing and underlines why Ian will not be permitted to become a lead guitar player: Dokken.

RHYTHM GUITAR: The only thing you need to know about rhythm guitar is that is, at bottom, the true heart of punk rock. Stuttering, slashing aggression, without calling specific attention to yourself. Angry at the world, but with a purpose. Trying to keep in control while skittering across the fretboard. Ian is permitted to become a rhythm guitar player. Absolutely.

LEAD SINGER: To be a good lead singer, whether you also play an instrument or not, you need to think that you have something interesting to say. Few people actually have anything interesting to say (for exceptions see, for example, Bad Religion) so this is somewhat of a paradox. Lead singers must be deluded by their own ego into thinking that they have something interesting to say, and then they have to say it with such conviction that people listen, whether or not they actually do have anything interesting to say. It's complicated that way.

You will note that I have not said anything about actual singing ability. Since the mid-1960s, the ability to sing has been completely optional for singers. This is, again, somewhat paradoxical, but makes life somewhat simpler. If Ian has no musical talent, for example, being a singer is a good option. If he wants to find dates more easily, being a lead singer is a good option (as I discovered myself, being a bass player is of limited utility in that regard. My wife, when she met me, didn't even know that I was in a band. Conversely, every guitar player, drummer and singer I know is dating someone who met them BECAUSE they were a guitar player, drummer or singer in a band. Clearly, I didn't know what I was doing).

In any event Ian's options are many. I did not include keyboard player, because the number of cool keyboard players is minimal (members of Wire, Six Finger Satellite and Killing Joke

being the exceptions) and I did not include DJs because DJs are not only not actually members of bands, but are figments of our collective subconscious, and do not actually exist.

Ian, it's a great big world. Just play it cool, boy. Real cool. And remember to call your dad when you're on tour.



I've come to recognize my columns as periodic updates of my sporadic, often contradictory reactions to the world of

punk. Some days I love it, some days I hate it, but mostly these days I'm unimpressed. Is this the normal reaction for a not-so-old-but-I-feel-like-I'm-aging punk kid?

I recently saw a band perform that really excites me—musically, ideologically, politically, aesthetically, and lyrically. The guitarist (we'll call him Steve) paused between songs, stepped up to the mic, and explained that they had recently left Detroit, where anarchists, punk kids, and other lefties had staged a protest of the Organization of American States meeting in Detroit and Windsor (June 2-4). He described a scene where the police tackled kids off their bikes during a Critical Mass ride, subjected protestors to questionable searches and arrests, and used the media to promote anti-protester sentiments across the city. The band felt like it was a good idea to get the hell out of Dodge before they were arrested in the middle of a cross-continent tour. So here they were, safely at the show in Columbus, and Steve wrapped up his account of the mayhem in Detroit by saying that in the face of this kind of police oppression, the fact that we were all gathered together to communicate with each other was revolutionary. I looked around the room and wondered: is this the revolution?

Don't get me wrong—in the context of the police crackdown in Detroit, it must have felt like a revolutionary act to be able to communicate radical ideas in a safe environment. But to me, it just felt like an overwhelmingly *safe environment*. As in nothing doing; as in no threat; as in just what the hell is this revolution going to accomplish? I have felt that excitement for our community, our movement that we call punk, hardcore, anarchy, grrrl, emo. I have come home from a protest, a show, a workshop, and felt optimistic that we can take on the whole fucking world and win. I have felt incredibly disappointed and worn down by infighting, cliques, and insider politics. But lately, I have felt way too comfortable and uninspired.

For several years, as I logged more time and involvement in the punk scene, I felt like it was my home. I identified myself as a punk, and was sure I'd be into the scene for a long time coming.

That identity has come to matter less and less to me over the past 6 months. I can't imagine that I'll ever leave it completely behind, but the name "punk" just doesn't fit like it used to. My friend Laura told me recently that she had started to wonder what kids who had been really into emo, queercore, and grrrl could go now, now that these sub-categories have all but dried up (at least around here). She came up with three unsatisfactory answers: Christianity, metal, and indie rock—hardly anything for a self-respecting radical to get excited about.

For me, the story is a little bit different. I am a mostly straight, traditionally educated, young white man from an upper class background. As such, politics of identity are always a little tricky for me, in that identifying with my "background" reads like pride in a life of unearned privilege. This is not something I want to play up. I'm comfortable admitting that this is what I come from, but I reject, in theory, the slew of social systems that created this socioeconomic identity. (I'm still trying to figure out how to reject them in reality.) This is why I found so attractive about the world of punk that I sought out, and finally joined, at the ripe old age of 19. Punk was (and is) a haven for those of us who are damned unsatisfied with the world around us. But more and more, it seems like only a haven, when I want it to be a staging ground, if not a full-blown launch pad. What does it really mean that a subculture exists largely to provide a safe haven for disaffected privileged people? If this is the revolution, we've done a damn fine job of reflecting the big bad society we claim to despise so thoroughly. Like a funhouse mirror, we've changed the way things look, but precious little about the content. As if the aesthetic of protest and the rhetoric of resistance are the full story, we pat ourselves on the back for creating something revolutionary. I guess what I'm really asking is that we ask harder questions about who benefits from this "revolution" and why it's set up this way.

Ready for me to pull a U-turn and head in the opposite direction? Just because I'm about to contradict myself doesn't mean I take anything back.

Since punk works so well as a shelter for privileged people, we are encouraged to stay where it feels safe and comfortable. This leads to two huge problems. First, we stay in our clubhouse and rarely venture out into any area where we might make any difference. Yes, there are some really exciting ideas and resources within punk, but if someone doesn't come looking for us, we aren't very good about sharing. (Shit, we aren't even good about sharing when someone does come looking, if they don't fit whatever criteria we set up.) If we are going to share our ideas with non-punk people, we have to make a serious commitment to making our ideas and ourselves more accessible. No, a deafening band with incomprehensible vocals doesn't count as communication, no matter how much it sounds like, ahem, music to our ears.

But the second problem this generates is that we become so focused on our little clubhouse that we lose the ability to even look out the windows, let alone venture outside. This in itself wouldn't be so dangerous, were it not for an all-too-common trait found in

most punks I know: a knack for self-destructive criticism. (I should acknowledge that for the next few sentences I'm stealing ideas liberally from what Steve—yes the same Steve that played guitar in the beginning of the column—shared during dinner as his theory on why the punk scene is a mess). It seems safe to say that most of us punks grew up outcasts, misfits, or in some way socially undesirable. For those of us who fit that description, high school was a profoundly miserable experience until the day we realized what a load of shit the popularity scheme in our town was. This realization, however it happened, lead to us looking very critically at many of the ways the world works. From the popular clique at school to traditional ideas of education, dress, sexuality, to the glaringly unfair class structure, to the hypocrisy of the goddamn Gulf War, we started to question just about everything. And we got to be very good at deconstructing nearly anything we were confronted with; breaking it down into parts and figuring out just what was wrong with each little part, and how they all contributed to the fucked up whole. This is a good and necessary development in critical thinking. Sometime during this process is when a lot of us discovered the world of punk, and with a sigh of relief, found that we were at last among people who were just as adept at the process of criticism and deconstruction, and often even more seasoned than we were. (Okay, so I'm simplifying the story a little, but I bet it applies to more than a few of us.)

Problem is, we all got so immersed in the punk scene that the only place to focus our superhuman ability to deconstruct the world was on the people around us. This is how infighting blows into mammoth proportions, as we break things down into smaller and smaller parts until we've completely atomized a once-large community into tiny clumps of people who think they are the only "true" punks, the only ideologically pure people left. And we're left with a lot of lonely people standing in the dismantled ruins of one of the few things that made us feel welcome.

So what exactly am I saying? I think it's incredibly important that we continue to be critical, but not to the degree that we're always checking each other's creds to the zillionth degree and "calling people on their shit" over every minor point. I think it's crucial that we be supportive of each other individually and of the community as a whole, but not to the degree that we exist only as a mutual admiration society. Punk should not be a way for unpopular kids to replicate the bullshit they hated so much before they found punk, nor a place where the privileged few of American society can exploit our privilege even further while wearing the mantle of the radical. Ultimately, what I'm saying is that punk does have revolutionary potential, but we all seem hell bent on preventing the realization of that potential. We've been cutting too much slack for the unfair patterns we don't need to repeat, while tightening the rope around each other for not living up to our exacting standards.

I'd like to be proven wrong. I'd like people to show me examples of punk living outside of these twin destructive dynamics. I'm serious. Write with examples, suggestions, criticisms, or arguments. I haven't written back to anyone who wrote about my "Onward Christian Soldiers" column, mostly because I feel that

my original piece addressed all the points people raised. Sorry. Generally speaking, I try to write back to everyone.

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I've enjoyed the following lately. Check them out. *Klaus Kinski, My Best Fiend*—Werner Herzog. *Evolution Of A Race Riot*—Mimi Nguyen (ed). *Drinking Sweat In The Ash Age*—Travis Fristoe & Mike Taylor. *The Assassin and the Whiner #II-12*—Carrie McNinch. *The Ethical Slut*—Dossie Easton & Catherine Liszt. *I'm Johnny And I Don't Give a Fuck #4*—Andy. *Clamor*—Jen Angel & Jason Kucsma (eds.). *Lovesick* (live). *Franklin* (live). Underground Publishing Conference, Bowling Green OH June 9-10. *Passion*—Catharsis. *Dead Man*—Neil Young. *History Is What's Happening*—The Ex.

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This column is part 3 in a series of stories about one of my trips in Europe. The last column left me in Malmö, Sweden on tour with His Hero is Gone (Todd, Paul, Yannick, Carl) and Y from Germany (Henrik, Thomas, Matthias, Hartmut) plus an assorted motley of 4 other people (Joaquin, Steve, Jörn, and Marian).

Friday 17 April, 1998 • Malmö & Jönköping, Sweden

The next morning we returned to the club in Malmö to load the equipment. While everyone was sort of hanging out I snuck away to steal some much needed supplies like markers for the merchandise lists and scissors to cut up patches. Everyone regrouped and headed off to the grocery store. I believe this was the one where we found the awesome vegan ice cream that had everyone fighting over flavors. Upon leaving the supermarket we headed down the street...and straight into the store I'd just stolen a bunch of stuff from. I nervously paced a nearby side street while everyone else was inside making purchases, wondering what the hell was wrong with me.

On the first gas run, I was wandering around the station when I noticed something peculiar. I went inside and tapped Todd on the shoulder. "Um, does the van take gas or diesel?" He looked at me, "Diesel, why?" We went back outside and sure enough, gas was pumping away into the van. Oops. (I'll spare the person at fault the embarrassment of having his name printed in association with this.) Fortunately there were 2 large picnic tables we were able to sit at from where we watched the van being towed away. People disappeared one by one into the foresty area around the station. I found this little playground and swung for a little

bit by myself, enjoying the quiet and being alone for the first time in a while. I suddenly felt that time of the month coming on and headed back to the station to gank some tampons. I had to ask Joaquin to translate the information on the boxes for me. "Um, is this regular or super absorbency?" He didn't seem the least bit embarrassed.

Carl came wandering up holding something carefully in his hands. "Look what I found!" I glanced down and saw a tiny dead lizard curved in his hands. "They're my favorite animal." I took this great picture of him looking at the lizard, Joaquin smiling behind him, and Henrik giving the camera a quizzical look.

About 3 or 4 long hours later we saw the van returning. We ran up to it cheering and waving, thankful for being saved from unbelievable boredom. I can't remember exactly what the story was but I seem to recall someone saying that the man driving the tow truck brandished a gun, saying something about how easy it is to kill someone. Maybe I'm making that up, I really can't remember.

We managed to arrive at the show somewhat on time. There was this huge room in the squat filled with picnic tables where a ton of us sat down and ate together. Seriously, there is nothing in the world better than this! I looked forward to dinner every night and getting to hang out with everybody at the show. This drunk guy with orange hair kept standing up and waving a fork menacingly at us. "You guys aren't punk! Who told you guys you're fucking punk, huh? You aren't shit! Fuck America!" and then he'd fall on his ass and his friends would have to pick him up. Some guy was wearing a leather jacket covered with spikes and a His Hero is Gone patch on the back. Todd was absolutely gleeful about it so I obliged him by taking a photo of the kid.

This was probably one of the longest shows I'd ever been to in my life. While I was sitting behind the merchandise I was attempting to read *Tales from the Clit* with a flashlight. The distro guy next to me asked what I was so intent on reading in the dark. I showed him the cover. "Hm, interesting. What is it about?" We ended up getting into a pretty in-depth discussion about pornography. He said he thought pornography was exploitative and degrading to women. I asked why he thought that. He sort of stumbled a little bit. I said, "Have you ever thought about this on your own or do you accept this because you think that's what you should believe as a conscientious male?" He admitted the latter was true. I laid down all my views on pornography (which I will spare you the details of at this particular moment) and he seemed quite shocked to be listening to the ideas of a feminist woman who wasn't anti-porn.

After about two years, Joaquin and Steve's band, Counterblast, finally took the stage. I wiped the cobwebs from my eyes and ventured up to the front to watch them. Even though I thought they played too long I was impressed by their power and was excited to see this somewhat legendary band. Y absolutely ripped that night! Man, they were so great. I don't think I took any photos of them that night because I was so into just watching them instead.

The show wrapped up pretty late and, after stepping over all the drunks passed out in the alley, we headed to Joaquin's apartment to sleep. He had some pretty interesting decor; I seem to recall some sort of tie-dyed wall hanging. He gave those of us who didn't already have it a 7" of his other band, Farcical. Immediately following this, Yannick and Carl had a little contest. Joaquin threw a G-anx t-shirt into the air and Yannick caught it. Carl looked so bummed that Yannick just shrugged and handed it to him. "Oh well, you like them more than I do anyway."

Saturday 18 April, 1998 • Oslo, Norway

We crossed the Norwegian border without trouble but ended up having to wait for this other band, Jin Rik Shaw, to make it through. All I remember is that Jörn kept saying "...bastard!" and the rest of the Germans would laugh hysterically, causing the rest of us to bust a nut even though we had no idea what they were talking about. This was to become almost like a theme of the tour with them as well as saying, "fuck you" constantly and with no reason. "Hey Kim!" "What?" "Fuck you!" and everyone would laugh for hours. It was our special little way of communicating since none of us U.S. folk knew German and the Germans didn't know much English.

After being passed out in the van for several hours I woke up to the sight of the famous Norwegian forests, inspiration to many a black metal band. I could certainly understand the mind-bending properties of these dense plots of land stretching for miles and miles beyond the line of vision. I stared into them, lost. The rest of the scenery was beautiful—little islets with quaint houses on them and lots and lots of green everywhere.

The squat was called Blitz which I thought was pretty great and it had been around for over 15 years! It was so incredible. There was a restaurant/bar and show space on the first floor and on the other floors was a huge infoshop with tons of books and shirts, photo darkroom, etc. I got a t-shirt that said something like, "15 years fighting the state and capitalism...the struggle for freedom is international!" We were told that we couldn't sleep there because they'd recently been firebombed. And, oh yeah, you can't go outside alone because there was an anti-fascist rally today and they're out on the street looking for us. Whoa, uh, no problem, heh heh.

Jin Rik Shaw had been together for six years but this was their first show ever! I didn't watch them as I was stuck behind the merchandise but luckily had Thomas, who was watching his distro, to keep me company. We got in this crazy huge conversation about everything under the sun. Of course we got on the topic of the state of punk rock and he said, "I don't consider myself a political part of a music scene but a musical part of a political scene."

While we were talking a few things kind of caught my eye. One was this very young punk couple a few feet away from us. The girl was sitting on the guy's lap and they were whispering in each other's ears, smiling, and looking into each other's eyes. The romantic in me leapt out and I felt warm inside watching them, wishing I could be that young again, not caring, and not having to think about all this stupid shit regarding relationships. The other

thing that I noticed was some sort of scuffle that I followed outside. In the street there was a guy completely covered in blood and wearing three shirts. He was waving his arms around and a couple people would randomly walk up to him and start beating on him. I couldn't get a straight answer about what happened, just some mumbling about skinheads.

At some point in the night, Henrik walked up with a puzzled look on his face and handed me a scrap of paper. "Um, Kim? I found this on the ground and I do not understand what it says. Can you tell me?" I looked down at the words scrawled on the paper: "fuck you."

We stayed with one of the guys from Jin Rik Shaw and for the first time on the whole tour, the windows weren't immediately opened when we walked in.

Sunday 19 April, 1998 • Porsgrunn, Norway

On the way to Porsgrunn we talked about the interview somebody had done the night before with Todd. He had asked all these weird questions like, "What kind of music do you listen to while you're having sex?" and "None of you guys are one of those weirdos that puts both the peanut butter and jelly on the same side of the bread, are you?" and "Do you wipe your ass standing up or sitting down?" We discovered that, indeed, we did have among us a weirdo who put the peanut butter and jelly on the same side of the bread and Todd was horrified to find out that two of us wiped ass while standing.

We arrived at the show about an hour or so late and saw two very clean cut-looking straight edge kids drowning in Adidas and Nike gear waiting on the sidewalk with their arms crossed. "Whoa, man, they look pissed." We opened up the back of the van and Paul climbed in to start handing equipment to people. One of the show organizers came up to him while his back was turned and asked if we needed any help. Paul, thinking it was one of the Germans, just waved his hand at him and said, "Yeah, yeah, fuck you," without turning around. We all broke out into hysterics and he turned around to see the kid standing there, mortified. "Oh my god! I'm so sorry! I thought you were..." The kid walked away.

I missed the first band because I was eating and exploring this dock nearby the show space but I heard they came out all decked out in their sportswear and the first thing they said was, "Thanks to the asshole bands for being late." When I walked back into the show Thomas came up to me holding a white t-shirt and a marker. "Can you help me with something? My English isn't good enough to do this." I grabbed my notebook and sketched a little t-shirt design into it. The front would have a Nike swoosh on the chest saying "Hardcore" above it instead of Nike. Then on the back was written, "I support: Child labor, Assassination of union leaders, Wages of 46¢ a day, 120 hour work week" with each point marked by a little swoosh and at the bottom in big capital letters, "Corporate Exploitation: Just do it!" Ironically enough, Thomas and I had been talking about this very phenomenon the night before in Oslo. We were both more than a little

disgusted with all these righteous SxE dudes going on and on about animal rights and the environment in total disregard for the repressive situations perpetuated by the clothes they spend hundreds of dollars on. Henrik wore the shirt while Y played. Unfortunately, there were only about ten other people there besides the bands and no one from the first band was present. I was hopping around taking photos of them and noticed that every person standing in front was someone that I was in the van with and that there was quite a stench coming from that area. Todd grabbed me while I was roaming around, "That shirt seriously rules! Did you get a picture of it?" It was somewhat difficult to stifle my laughter whenever I looked at it.

Thor, the organizer of the Swedish & Norwegian portion of the tour, was freaking out. He had called somewhere to find out about a ferry back to Germany and apparently they were all broken down. I felt kind of bad for him because nobody else really cared but he was so stressed out about it. He paced in the food room for what seemed like hours, clutching his cell phone to his ear and barking into it.

The sound guy had taped the show off the board and we listened to it in the van. Unfortunately the Y stuff sounded like shit but the His Hero is Gone side turned out fucking amazing! Everything was crystal clear, clear enough for the extremely out of tune beginning of Chain of Command to be painful. Man, when that second guitar came in I couldn't help but laugh out loud. I fell asleep and when I woke up we were in front of Blitz again. I groggily asked what we were doing there. Someone told me that since all the ferries were out of commission we were going to spend the night in Oslo again and we had to load the equipment into Blitz. I looked at my watch. "Why are we doing that right now? It's 3 in the morning! I'll fucking sleep in the van, let's just go to the house we're staying at." No one argued and Joaquin offered to stay in the van with me. Since it was like 10 degrees outside and I had no sleeping bag Carl offered me his coat and Thomas donated his sleeping bag. I bundled up tightly, hoping I wouldn't wake up drenched in sweat which always seems to happen no matter what when I sleep in vans.

Monday 20 April, 1998 • Norway

I woke up drenched in sweat. Joaquin had to catch an 8 o'clock train and jumped outside to roll up his sleeping bag. These men at a nearby construction site close to the van saw us get out and their eyes widened like saucers. They clutched each other, whispering frantically and pointing at us. Joaquin gave me a big hug and we wished each other luck, saying we'd probably run into each other again someday in some other part of the world. In stark contrast to the interior of the van it was freezing cold outside so I ducked back in, put on the coat and sleeping bag, and fell asleep again.

Around noon Carl rapped on the window. We went inside the apartment where everyone was just sitting around on their asses, dazed from days of touring. Ah, one of the joys of touring: waiting for an indeterminate amount of time to do nothing.

Finally at two we went back to Blitz to sort out the ferry situation and have breakfast. The meal actually turned into dinner as it wasn't ready until about 4. While we were eating, Carl remarked, "This would never happen in the States. Something goes wrong for a band, they return somewhere, get a place to stay and food to eat." Not to mention that we were two bands with three roadies. Three cheers for everyone at Blitz! The food was great—baked potatoes, salad, and veggie patties with this gravy that tasted so meaty it scared me.

As soon as we were done eating we left to drive to Göteborg to catch the ferry. We arrived two hours earlier than we had anticipated (who the hell told us it was a 7-hour drive?), making this the longest day wasted doing nothing of the tour thus far. Once we actually boarded the ferry around midnight we began the familiar futile search for a seating section somewhere. Can someone please tell me what the fuck is up with that? Somehow Carl and I lagged behind the others and lost them but we stumbled across these hallways of rooms with beds in them. One of the rooms was actually open so we stole in, locking the door behind us. Somebody kept trying to open the door for about 15 minutes but luckily failed.

We talked for probably two hours in hushed tones—well, hushed for me, normal for him. It was the first somewhat in-depth personal conversation I'd had with anybody in several months. As usual, I figured out a lot about myself by talking with somebody. Of course I also sounded overly self-absorbed and analytical. I realized that I didn't have any roots at all and that the two people I considered to be my closest friends would probably be surprised if I told them I thought of them that way. He asked me if I ever felt lonely and I realized that I had never really thought about that. I told him that sometimes I thought I was a robot, totally devoid of any emotion. He said I shouldn't think so much.

After a lengthy pause in the conversation and murmurs of 'good-night' he got up to take a shower and I fell asleep. The next thing I knew, Carl was shaking me by the shoulder saying we had to leave. A woman standing in the doorway was yelling at us in Swedish. We found most of the others before we had to get off the ferry at around 3:30 am. We clambered back into the van, only 10 of us now, and I passed out leaning on Henrik's shoulder.

Tuesday 21 April, 1998 • Bremen & Hamburg, Germany

We got to Bremen around lunchtime and went to the squat His Hero is Gone had played at before. When we walked into the kitchen area Paul put his arm around Henrik and said with misty eyes and little joking sniffles, "This is where we spent our first morning together..." Thomas and Jörn came back with two loaves of bread. Todd looked at them and said, "Only two things of bread? One for me and one for who else?"

Sadly, after breakfast we had to leave the Germans behind and head off to Hamburg. Once in Hamburg we had no trouble finding the street we were supposed to be on but turned the wrong way. In an attempt to go around the block we ended up making random

turns for about 15 minutes. "Wait a minute. How the hell did we get lost here?!" We finally made it to the apartment of this guy Lars from Lebensreform around 6 or so and were treated to the most intriguing meal of the tour so far. Burritos with fake mince-meat, onions, guacamole, marinated lettuce, hummos, and some kind of cinnamon flavor. It was good though.

The show was at a practice space that was covered with graffiti. They were the only band playing; the organizers said they were going to show some kind of film beforehand. The practice room where they were supposed to play was tiny—no more than 20 people could possibly have fit in there. I set the merchandise up outside the room. All there was to set up or was a really small dresser with a triangular board that was about twice as long and half as thin precariously perched on top of it. Most of the stuff was hanging off the edges of the board, even the patches. A half an hour went by. I was told something like the organizers couldn't find a VCR so His Hero is Gone was the sole happening that night for 7 DM. They didn't really play very well (I suppose this is relative—a bad night for them is above and beyond most bands' sets) but people swarmed the merchandise table after they were done. When Yannick saw how much they sold he shook his head and mumbled, "People are stupid."

For some bizarre reason we decided to go see Unwound who were playing at some club that was on the way back to Lars' apartment. They were, of course, boring as fuck but His Hero is Gone had played their first or second show with them so I guess they at least had a little bit of a reason to be there. Carl found these Burger King postcards that said in German, "Vote for the Whopper—the only candidate that will go through flames for you." Not soon enough, a few of us went back to the apartment to relax. We were all feeling pretty drained from the long hours in the van so even the red light district couldn't tempt any of us to venture out for some nightlife. When the others got back, one of the guys there opened a window. I asked him if we could keep it closed because we were all sick. "Yeah, but it smells like shit in here," he grumbled, meaning, "You guys fucking reek." How in the world any touring band can stay fresh-smelling is beyond me.

Next stop: Berlin. To be continued...

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Coincidentally enough, right about the time I handed in the last installment of this column, two of the people I was writing about came to North America to travel. Henrik and Jörn came to visit me in Chicago, exactly two years to the day I first met them. We spent the next two weeks together almost every single second of every minute of each day and traipsed all over the place to Columbus, D.C., Montreal, Sherbrooke, and New York. I just felt so alive when I was with them. I thought, fuck, this is what life is about. I hadn't seen Henrik in two years and Jörn in about a year and a half and yet we were able to meet on another side of the world and have a fucking blast together again! In about another month and a half I will get to see them once again when I return to Europe and I am so excited! Even if I don't really have any super

close friends here in Chicago, I feel like I really am a part of this vibrant community that spans the globe. Every time I get my mail or open up my email I'm like a kid on Christmas day, anxious to get news from people and hear about their lives. I love nothing more than something like going to an anarchist gathering in Uruguay at the tail end of a tour I was on and seeing people from all over South America I'd met. Or going to a fest in a tiny town in Italy at the end of a 7-month long stay in Europe and having a similar kind of reunion there. There is nothing better than crossing cultural boundaries, making connections with people from all over and through that, coming to a better understanding of myself and the world around me. The whole world is becoming a huge playground for corporations and we are increasingly being divided by technology, borders, and a whole slew of other factors which would take me an entire other column to get into. I love the fact that regardless of language barriers and this separation encouraged and imposed on us by a capitalist society, something as pure and simple as friendship can still be born and last. As far as I'm concerned, that is one of the only things left they can't control or take away from me. The day I give that up is the day I might as well lay down all my arms and quietly wither away.

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At the risk of sounding fashionable, I really have no use for politics. Additionally, I part ways with most punk rockers in that I also have no

use for anti-politics, because, as I explained last issue, to be anti-anything entails being bound to the very thing one is supposed to be against. In that way, punk rock is very much interested in what THEY—the omnipresent narrators of our cultural text, such as the World Trade Organization, Time Warner, NBC or Barnes & Noble—are doing so that punk rock can say or do something in return, either protest (usually in the form of song), perform random acts of vandalism and/or conduct strategic cultural warfare in varying degrees.

I process in vignettes. It is difficult for me to accept linear analyses of current paradigms without always getting back to fundamental premises about how we live. Which is why when cultural critics lament the status quo, when often these critics are maintaining the current state of affairs each in his/her own way, I can't always accept the given premises when there is so much more to the picture. An example: most militant feminists are strongly identified with men and most chauvinist males are strongly identified with women¹. The righteousness of their critiques of gen-

der role relations, which may or may not be valid (I don't think it matters either way), often fails to acknowledge how both males and females need one another. It is a simple biological reality. In the face of righteousness, reality is overlooked.

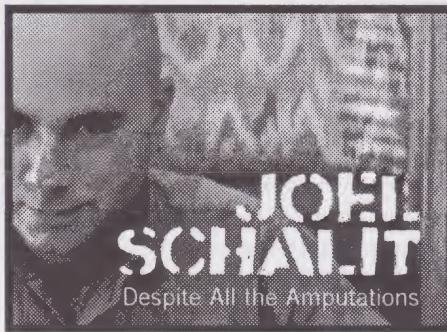
On a larger scale, without acknowledging that each of us is a contributor to our culture's collapse, no amount of righteousness will prevent our current drive toward extinction. It is critical for me to see within myself what needs improvement—and it is not enough to improve myself. Self-actualization is selfish in the face of cultural collapse. While I feel there is dire importance in not stressing about the stress of our culture, and consenting to what is, I also think that does not necessarily equate to complacency. Rather, it is from this position that instead of belaboring the countless externalities—whether it is greed, racism, homophobia, etc—movements of grander proportions may begin to occur.

It is like a farmer who relies heavily on mass-produced crops for survival. Drought occurs, and he is devastated financially. He has a choice: to wallow, or to walk. He consents to what he cannot control, accepts the weight of the situation, and finds a new way to live, a way which does not invest in what he cannot possibly manipulate. He practices less water reliance and efficient water use and reuse, incorporates cyclical principals of growth and regrowth, uses biodiversity for pest control rather than pesticides, plants human foods patterned after other plant communities², and he distributes his crops to his local community. In his transformation, the farmer finds a truer freedom. Everything around him benefits too.

¹ See, for example, *Love's Hidden Symmetry: What Makes Love Work in Relationships* by Bert Hellinger, Hunter Beaumont, Ph.D., and Gunther Weber and *Acknowledging What Is* by Bert Hellinger and Gariele ten Hövel.

² For a description of this type of farming, refer to chapter two in *Biomimicry* by Janine Benyus.

Issue 15 of Second Guess is still available: \$3.50 (US) ppd. to me at PO Box 9382, Reno, NV 89507-9382. It features an interview with author Daniel Quinn, and is only available by mail. www.secondguess.net



Last Saturday, I listened to the radio as I prepared breakfast. "London police prepare for May Day's anti-capitalism demon-

strations," the BBC announced as its lead story that morning. "Thousands of demonstrators are planning to stop all business downtown to protest against capitalism!" exclaimed the hostess of

News Hour. I put down my coffee and stared at the radio in disbelief. "What did she say?" I asked myself, a look of bewilderment spreading across my face. "Anti-capitalism? I must be dreaming!"

Being the longstanding Marxist that I am, I couldn't help but grin with self-satisfaction. These words tasted like candy in a mouth whose only memorable political sensation is the taste of bitterness. Just to hear that term being rendered so neutrally on a public news program felt like the biggest victory in the world. Even if nothing ever came of it, I thought, just uttering the phrase would be enough of a virus to get at least a few people thinking.

Nonetheless, this isn't the first time I've felt surprised these last few months. Beginning with the demonstrations that rocked the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle last November, and hearing everyone talk about the evils of globalization and even monopolization in the mass media, there appears to be some kind of change afoot. And I don't just mean to refer to the thousands of people whom all of the sudden appeared a second time in under a year at the IMF meeting in Washington DC last April. Nor do I necessarily mean the May Day Anti-Capitalism protestors who brought London to a standstill last week either, or the endless interviews on National Public Radio with the likes of Canadian author Naomi Klein, patron saint of the anti-brand name movement.

What I'm referring to is an overall change in the way people seem to be speaking about capitalism. They're starting to criticize it and it appears to be on everyone's increasingly liberalized lips, from mainstream news commentators applauding the potential breakup of Microsoft to the signs that young anti-sweatshop activists hold up in front of Gap and Old Navy stores. If this is really true and not just a figment of my starry-eyed imagination, it raises several extremely profound questions that are very tough to answer without sounding like a self-congratulatory revolutionary cheerleader at a Communist Party meeting of fellow higher beings. Are we witnessing a resurgence of leftist politics? Why now rather than when we elected Ronald Reagan president, fought the Persian Gulf War, watched President Clinton eviscerate federal welfare programs and continued a massive, decade long war of attrition against Iraq with no foreseeable end in sight?

The answer is simple. The Cold War is ten years behind us. Enough time has passed under the bridge to allow radical politics to reemerge in a manner that remains consistent with one of the old left's principle fetishes: the horror that remains capitalism. Regardless of the precise political orientation of the new progressive movements that flexed their muscles on the streets of Seattle, London, and Washington DC, consciousness of the destructive nature of capitalism seems to be the common denominator that rocks the bottom radical line, Black, Red, or Green. Or, simply oppositional, i.e. generically anti-corporate in a punk rock kind of way.

The new critique of capitalism takes many forms, from unions calling for an end to further outsourcing of American jobs to environmentalist and third world activists criticizing the way development programs designed to spur industrialization in the southern hemisphere destroy local ecosystems and keep

impoverished nations permanently in debt. While these may be very stereotypically breast beating complaints for progressives to make, the tenor with which they are currently being expressed, and the degree to which they criticize fundamental facets of free market economics is totally unprecedented, even by 1960s neo-academic standards. The underlying concern remains a very old fashioned progressive depreciation (for lack of a better term,) of greed, and the manner in which fundamental concepts like corporate profits takes precedence over peoples basic needs.

Another way to understand what's *anti-capitalist* about the new protest movement is to summarize the primary objects of its scorn: The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Organization for Cooperation and Development, and the World Trade Organization. All of these organizations have an extremely pejorative stigma attached to them because they represent a surreptitious kind of planetary executive which transcends the declining authority of the nation-state to make its own laws and insure the rights and the safety of its own citizens.

In the state's place stand these institutions, subordinating civil rights, laws and the environment to the ever-expanding needs of the free market and the pocketbooks of rich individuals and international conglomerates, many of whose annual earnings exceed the gross national products of many second and third world countries. In short, such financial organizations have assumed the previous role of the state. In doing so, they've further contributed to the erosion of democratic political institutions, already battered in North America and the European Union by nearly twenty years of continuous scaling back of government spending on welfare, education, health and the environment.

It would be a mistake to argue, as some public commentators and even leftists have recently done, that the new anti-capitalism in the United States and Great Britain is a product of the affluence that's graced both nations under the neo-liberal economic stewardship of Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. People don't take to the streets with such ferocity when they're well fed and over-employed, or when their moral consciousness and sense of citizenship has been enlarged by global communications infrastructures like CNN and AOL. North Americans and Europeans are finally criticizing capitalism again because they sense some kind of radical discrepancy between the decreasing quality of their lives and how the government and the media tells them they're supposed to be living. Can you blame them?

At a certain point, overwhelming poverty and an increasing lack of access to upward mobility in a world with so much money and so many freedoms becomes too hard to ignore, regardless of how frequently you've been told that every opportunity for self-advancement in the service industry is naturally yours. People have good reasons to feel disenchanted and lied to. Despite the massive profits being generated by the 'new' economy, in America the discrepancy between rich and poor is now greater than it was during the 1920s, when interest rates were at a similar all time low, and unemployment was extremely high. Even though commodity and gas prices have reached

record levels, there's been no significant increase in wages for Americans in almost thirty years. Meanwhile, the homeless continue to proliferate, the police get more violent, anti-crime legislation becomes even more medieval, and minorities consistently get pushed out of urban areas into new suburban slums.

While one could cite numerous other examples of disenfranchisement in the United States, insufficient employment opportunities and wages that lack purchasing power to buy into the new economy ought to be enough evidence to explain why Americans are becoming ambivalent about capitalism. Why? Because these are uncontrollable physical realities that we all have to personally confront in our everyday lives, regardless of how much time we spend watching television, attending worship services or surfing the Internet. That's what's so precious about the new anti-capitalism. Despite the ever-increasing demands for conformity and obedience that we are bombarded with on every side, people are still able to withstand the pressures of ideology, discrimination and disappointment strongly enough to feel like they're getting a raw deal from a society where survival of the richest is the only thing that's always assured.



*Keep you doped with
religion and sex and TV
And you think you're
so clever and classless
and free
But you're we're still
fucking peasants as far
as I can see*

—John Lennon
(updated by me)

Despite his undeniable songwriting talents and occasional perspicacity on social and cultural issues, John Lennon could be an arrogant asshole. In a city where thousands are homeless and hundreds of thousands struggle to come up with the rent on their shabby little hovels, Mr. "Imagine No Possessions" is said to have laid out a million bucks for a five-bedroom apartment which served no purpose other than to keep Yoko Ono's fur coat collection chilled to the proper temperature.

Note that in the quote above, it's "you" who are the peasants, you whose senses are so easily clouded by religion (Hello? John? Can you say "Maharishi?"), sex and TV. John himself was, presumably, far too sophisticated to fall for such societal blandishments, though one does wonder just what brainwashing tool was used to persuade him that the shrieks and screeches of his fatuous wife somehow added up to "art." Could it have been, um, sex? Could that also have been the secret weapon which turned the acerbic former Beatle into a declawed pussycat and househusband?

Leaving the sexual politics aside, it's also been reported that Lennon spent most of the latter years of his life parked in front of a TV set, but no doubt his superior powers of perception

enabled him to stare into the eye of the beast without suffering any ill effects, again unlike the rest of us "fucking peasants." But why am I even bringing this up? Who really cares about the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of some old hippie icon?

I certainly don't, but I mention Lennon's blind spot in an attempt to excise my own. Specifically, I'm about to launch a tirade against fat, dumb and complacent Americans whose embrace of reality rarely extends beyond the windshield of their car or the range of their remote control channel changer. But before I mount up on my high horse, let me hasten to point out that I'm currently engaged in a 5,000 mile tour of America which I'm conducting by, yes, automobile, and nearly every place I've stayed has been equipped with at least 60 channels of TV, which I've watched liberally.

So you see, even if John Lennon wouldn't admit to being one of the peasants he railed against, I will. And it's not that I'm claiming to be more honest than Lennon; it's just that I'm not arrogant enough to think I wouldn't get caught lying about it.

I'm about halfway through my trip now, having driven 2,600 miles in the past ten days and having traveled some of the most lonely and godforsaken back roads in this or most other countries. I even found a 300-mile stretch in North and South Dakota which didn't contain a single McDonald's, Taco Bell or other corporate fast food outlet. You would have thought I'd entered a parallel universe, or simply been transported 50 years back in time, to when towns had their own restaurants and their own character, rather than being afterthoughts to the local strip mall.

I deliberately stayed off the freeways when possible, and for the most part stopped at small cities and towns. My main destination was Milwaukee, for Stuart and Amber's wedding, which was very sensibly conducted in a brewery and turned out to be a lovely affair.

But why drive all the way across America when I could have been there in a four-hour plane ride? I wanted to see America at ground level. For the past three years I've been living outside the country, and even when I visited here it was in places like New York or San Francisco, hardly representative of real" America. Actually, I disagree with myself there. I think New York City represents much of what is best about America, and is every bit as much a natural wonder as the Grand Canyon or Yosemite.

Speaking of which, I drove through Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks on this trip, much of which were devastated by forest fires a few years ago. Nice if you like stump-covered mountainsides, but we have all we need of those in Northern California, courtesy of the international logging conglomerates. And at least they don't charge you \$20 to drive through their devastation.

But Lawrence, you're changing the subject, I hear you saying. You still haven't explained why the automobile-bashing Mr. Livermore hopped into his own personal gas-guzzler for a trip across the fruited (fruited with more cattle dung than anything else, I must say) plain instead of using some form of public transport like, oh, the train?

Well, as it happens, there is a train that goes from Berkeley to Milwaukee, and as it happens, I've taken that train to Chicago a

few times. And I considered going that route again, but what finally decided me against it was that it would be way too limiting. Basically the same reason that almost nobody in America uses public transport outside of a couple big cities.

It's not just that public transport sucks horribly, which it does, that the people who run it are generally criminals and incompetents who would never dream of riding their own buses and trains, or that schedules and services are anywhere from erratic to useless (which of course you'd expect of a system that's seldom if ever used by those who are designing it).

More than any of that, though, is the simple, tragic fact that during the 20th century America was radically redesigned with the automobile in mind. A visitor from another planet could easily get the impression that Earth's dominant life form was cars, and that humans were the equivalent of domestic animals that worked for the benefit of the cars.

Okay, I'm not going to go all Jeff Ott on you here. There is a place for cars, even if that place is not in the middle of great cities or in every person's driveway. I've enjoyed the benefits of traveling in cars (and tour vans) and probably will again. My gripe is not that cars exist or that most people use them, but that society is structured in a way that makes it difficult to impossible to have much of a life without one.

So anyway, there I am in Pocatello, Idaho, looking for a place to stay. What I have in mind is a cheap, non-chain motel, ideally with some red and blue neon and maybe a flamingo on the lawn, within walking distance of downtown. As it turns out, there's no such thing. All the motels are out by the interstate, sandwiched in between Wal-Mart and KFC, 34 gas stations, and the ever-spreading blob of sameness that devours the landscape with the rapacity and voracity of an especially vile cancer.

I spend a couple hours exploring downtown Pocatello, and I had to walk and drive pretty slowly to use up that much time. It's not that it's Nowheresville; Pocatello is the biggest town in Eastern Idaho and home to a large university. And it has a pretty nice-looking downtown, lots of old-fashioned red brick buildings and slightly down at the heels storefronts and alleys that look straight out of one those Hopper portraits of urban isolation.

But this place is a little too isolated. In short, there's no one there. Almost literally no one. If it weren't for the passing cars, there would be dead silence. Town appears to be closed for the weekend. I give up searching for a motel—even if I could find one now, this place looks too depressing to spend a whole night in—and head on to Idaho Falls.

Here I find my neon-lit motel, only six blocks walk from what passes for downtown. It's almost the same story, though to be fair, there are a few bars, a couple shouting drunks, and, miraculously, a completely empty Chinese restaurant that stays open till 11 and has one vegetarian dish.

That's the extent of the excitement, though, unless you get your kicks from sitting by the side of the road listening to the local goat-ropers rev the engines on their motorcycles and pickup trucks as they go roaring and screeching past.

The next night I'm in Livingston, Montana, and this is a nice town. Really small, the kind of place where old ladies start talking to you in the checkout line at the five and dime and are soon whipping out pictures of the grandchildren, a place where you can walk most places, where they have good restaurants and even a semblance of a night life.

Only trouble is, it's a toytown. It looks authentic as hell, but the buildings are lovingly preserved to keep that Old West feel. Half the population is from New York or Southern California, and there's serious money here. All things considered, of course, I'd rather be here than most small towns you stumble into on your way across America.

What kills me, though, is that what makes Livingston special and desirable is that it's such a good facsimile of what almost every American town used to be. Unfortunately, if you're not fortunate or wealthy enough to live in one of the handful of towns that had the sense to preserve itself; you'll have to settle for Disneyland next time you want to hang out on Main Street, USA.

This isn't about living in the past, wanting everything to be cute and quaint. Modern buildings can be beautiful and exciting, too. Even shopping malls, if done right, can blend into an existing community instead of destroying it.

But have a look at Green Bay, where I am now. The city had to spend thousands of bucks hanging banners from every lamppost telling you that you were "Downtown." Should that be necessary? Wouldn't you think that it should be obvious you are "Downtown?" I mean, it's the place where the lights are bright and there's excitement in the air, where people go just to see what's happening and who they might meet.

Apart from the banners, though, what is the most distinguishing feature of downtown Green Bay? Well, it's a very good place to park a car. Half of "downtown" is parking lots, there a few blocks of old-fashioned buildings, and then a lovely five-story parking structure attached to the mall.

And oh, what a mall. I said it was possible for malls to blend into an existing community: this one came elbowing, no, bludgeoning its way into town. It shoved half the existing building out of the way, closed many of the streets that led to others, and, with all the subtlety of a neutron bomb, dumped a enormous shitload of hideous yellow concrete in the middle of what was left.

No windows, no interaction between the old town and the new mall, just a blank facade that says "Fuck you, Green Bay. We don't care about your stupid little town. Just get in here and spend money."

Of course it wasn't "the mall" who did this, or even the corporate interlopers who designed and built it. It was local people, too, some who no doubt thought they were doing a good thing for their community, some who couldn't care less what happens to downtown Green Bay because they've got a nice place in the suburbs, and some who are just so far gone, their senses so dulled, their values so debased, that they simply can't understand why there's a problem. One piece of concrete is just as good as another pile of bricks, as long as it's generating cash flow.

Or even if it isn't; some of the worst offenses against human decency in Green Bay are the government buildings. Windowless slabs in the brutalist style of the '60s and '70s, some of them

resembling jails (one of the less ugly ones actually was the jail), others psychological torture chambers where the hateful exteriors hinted of even grimmer goings-on within.

Who builds these things and why? Post offices and city halls used to suggest the grandeur of Greek and Roman temples; now they look as though they're designed by and for the mentally ill. Did Americans lose the ability to say, "Don't think you're plunking that piece of shit down on my block, let alone using my tax dollars to pay for it!"

Or did Americans simply lose the ability to care? Was Lennon right, that they've become too doped with sex and religion and TV, that they no longer have any idea what is wrong or right, good or bad, beautiful or ugly? (And it's not just Americans, either; more damage was done to London and other English cities by modern architects and urban "planners" than by four years of German bombing.)

But there I go again, falling into the trap of thinking it's all the fault of "those" ignorant peasants. Hey, I drove here, too. And at 10:30 on a Monday night, with "Downtown" shuttered and dark apart from a couple yuppie bars, I face a choice of going without dinner or joining ten miles of stop-and-go traffic threading its way through America's true Desolation Row, that heartbreaking, soul-killing, contemptuous and contemptible monument to mindless consumption that lines America's highways from New England to San Diego.

Was I in Green Bay? It might as well have been Santa Rosa, or Route 1 north of Boston, or South Florida or the mother of all suburban sprawls, Los Angeles. By night there's no scenery but the billboards and the stoplights, so apart from the license plates and the weather, there's no way of telling.

I watch half a dozen kids pile out of car and scamper across the parking lot. They're laughing and excited, like kids everywhere, just out for a little fun. They've only just gotten their driver's licenses, and an expedition to Taco Bell probably ranks as high adventure.

I wonder if I'm being old-fashioned, if the essentials of life remain the same regardless of external trappings, if driving ten miles to Taco Bell is fundamentally the same thing as walking down to the corner hamburger stand. But just then I see the kids' faces fall. The doors to Taco Bell are locked. It's drive-through only.

They probably would have hung out inside Taco Bell for an hour or two, flirting, making messes, shooting straw wrappers at each other. Instead they piled wearily back into their car and got into a line of 10 or 12 cars waiting like patient cattle for an opening at the slaughterhouse. It takes nearly half an hour to purchase some fat-laden glop that they probably didn't even want that much, anyway, and about ten minutes to gobble it down. Nothing left to do now but join the hundreds of other carloads of kids driving back and forth, back and forth on the highway to nowhere.

How do I know this? I was right behind them, I'm sorry to say. I went out to see America and now I was melting into it. A few more weeks out here and I might be subsisting on a steady diet of Denny's, Taco Bell and gasoline fumes.

It's not all a nightmare out here, of course. There are occasional oases of food of culture, small towns like Livingston, big cities like

Minneapolis and Chicago, and every town, no matter how hideous it might look, usually has some truly great people living there.

But trying to stay afloat in America, let alone trying to make it a more beautiful and fulfilling place, is like treading water in a mixture of quicksand and diarrhea. You can't help wondering if it's worth the effort. It is, of course, but sometimes it's just got to seem easier to sink into a miasma of booze or drugs or TV or food, to just say "I don't care," to suggest that only suckers do care.

I know I'll look at my own town differently when I get back to California. I'll appreciate being able to walk a few blocks and get non-corporate food from all over the world, I'll appreciate being able to ride the train to San Francisco instead of sitting in miles of traffic, I'll appreciate all the beautiful old houses and gardens.

But I'll also know that this is la-la land, too, that because most of urban America has been destroyed or strip-malled, people are willing to pay almost any amount of money to live in the few civilized enclaves that are left. Berkeley and San Francisco will soon be cute little playgrounds for the rich, already are to a large degree, and meanwhile, just over the hills, in Walnut Creek, just down by the Bay in Richmond and San Pablo, lurks the slavering behemoth that feeds on the soul of America.

Hell, it's no good blaming it on the suburbanites anymore. Most of my friends in Berkeley and Oakland and San Francisco drive cars now, too. I do sometimes, too, though I hate myself for it, regrettably conceding that I don't always have enough patience or virtue to follow my own principles. Like I said, America eats the soul, and I feel mine being nibbled at around the edges. Beauty should be our salvation, and everywhere we're killing it.



rip it up.
jessica
hopper

Damn, it feels
good to be a
pirate...

So, it's currently the summer of my most 23rd year yet and I am in the slow, but triumphant and giddy process of learning

how to skateboard, as taught to me by my fearless roommate-lady, the oft-mentioned Teeter. I originally tried learning how to skateboard in ninth grade, except that time I was indoors and on acid. I think. Second time was living in LA a few years back, and that consisted of rolling up and down the driveway and into the bushes in order to prevent my borrowed 10-inch Vision concave deck & I from catching some death in the street. My skating future was halted as the fear of knocking out some teeth on the sidewalk overruled my dreams of one day rolling top speed on a skateboard that was mine. But, alas here I am five years later, wishing I had been born with 4 little wheels instead of 2 little feet, trying to make up for lost time. I'm not interested in the "fancy" stuff, no doing tricks off a picnic table shit or the things I see in the skate magazines. I want to get from point a to b without

running into a car or building.

This weekend, Teeter and I were skating, against traffic, up a hill, in Milwaukee, and I felt this glorious rush of complete freedom. Like us two ladies, right then, could be some stealth minifaction, a cabal, reeking havoc wherever there is a paved road, infinitely self-assured that I was 107 pounds of pure calamity, and newly mobile calamity at that. And I then, about 75 feet later, I ate shit in front of 4 dudes with schmoehawks (the mohawk you can wear to work™) unloading fucking bongo drums out of a truck, who all chuckled at me in one synchronized stoner laugh.

Ok. Weekend before this last one, I went to Indiana, state of my conception and birth, and home of 95% of my extended family, to witness my cousin's graduation from High School in what a banner seen at previous family graduations told me was "the largest high school field house in the world" (!!). It was initially slated to be a me rolling-in and rolling out in 24 hours or less solo endeavor, but the always golden promise of thrifting managed to lure Teeter into accompanying me. We woke up early Saturday morning, loaded up on vegan muffins and lemonade-ice tea combos, collected our change for the toll roads, and as soon as we hit the freeway we put on the new Isis CD. Loud. So loud that we could only exchange knowing looks in agreement of "...so fucking rad." Sometime after we entered Indiana, we began discussing such hot topics as, Do you think we're the only people who've ever listened to Isis on this freeway. Three hours later (some 20 minutes of which, one must note, were spent on The Kenneth "Babyface" Edmunds Highway. Yes, Babyface, the R&B he-vagina—to bite SB's word, which I don't know exactly what she means when she calls him that, but it really sums him up nicely—has his own highway.) we roll past the Wal-Mart, past a trailer park, past house after house with various faux nature-scenes portrayed on the lawn by sub-life size ceramic animals, up the gravel drive way—in time for my cousin's graduation open house. It's all teenagers and a family milling on the porch with paper plates and Pepsi. My Nana ushers us in, insisting we have some lunchmeat, some cake, some meatballs, some fruit salad and some Pepsi. Rather than explain that Teeter is vegan, I opt to tell them she is instead allergic to all dairy and meat, that way they won't try and fix her a plate of anything. The allergy excuse becomes the best way to try and explain why we aren't partaking in Pepsi n' Meatballs or the beer/smoking fun with them. We each grab a handful of carrots and wander into the yard, and my uncle teaches us to throw/play horseshoes (for those that are not privy to the world of rural-games such as these, horseshoes is the process of pitching an actual metal horseshoe up in the air in attempts to ring it around or next to this 8-10" high stake in the ground about 20 feet away). Little did we know that horseshoes would become our newest obsession, nor that we would soon attract a crowd on the porch to entertain with our bad throws. Teeter got six points, I got none—as my horseshoes continually landed over in the bushes a good 6 feet from their intended destination.

We go to the graduation and giggle through the program that seemed chock full of these suburban-exotic names like Krystelle, Nykki Nicole, Vyonica, all prone to excess K's and Y's and V's and being spelled anyway but the most normal, all sounding like strippers

names. We bail early and head home and await a the return of my cousins and a mass of their friends, who are all going to "party" at the lake at the other end of the property. The teen-party posse departs, all the adults go to sleep. My cousin's best friend Dave, covered in grass stains, wakes Teeter and I up at nine am. All he is saying is "Didja hear? I got away!" "Got away from what?" From the cops. As in the cars full of cops that raided the party at 5 am and arrested my cousins and a dozen of their friends, who were all currently still in jail for underage drinking, some for possession of pot. Dave got away by running over several miles into the woods, despite being chased by cops and dogs. My uncle returns shortly, with my blood and grass stained cousins, who have just been bailed out of jail with their own graduation money, who also ran, according to their estimate, about two miles before being caught. One of them barefoot. I listen to them tell and retell the story to every family member, talking as if their big mistake had not been drinking and getting high at the lake, but rather not running fast or far enough.

All this made me start thinking about how my life would be different if I had grown up here, if my mom hadn't wanted to live in the city. Would I have still turned out punk? Or would I have been at the party at the lake with my super normal cousins? If we weren't related, would they have kicked my ass in high school? Do they ever wish they could live in the city? Is the only reason I am punk is because I had options and access to records and kids with bad attitudes? Is it because I had things to be offended by and lifestyles to posit myself against? Is it nature or nurture?

After the morning debacle, Teeter and I went down to the lake with my uncle, in his truck, and he showed us around our family property. My uncle says vehicle instead of car or truck. He introduces us to one of his best friends, Kenny, who is fishing at the lake, and when talking to us, ends every sentence with "Ain't that right, Kenny?" He told us about how he recently caught some people fishing here, a recurring problem he says, and when he told them to leave and they wouldn't, he shot a hole in their cooler with his rifle. He told us about how he works for the city and this winter a major pipeline broke and he and a small crew spent 19 hours straight, sopping wet in 5-degree weather fixing it. Any feelings of me thinking I have ever been a badass or even kind tuff, completely evaporated right then and there. Any thinking that I was more capable of handling a gnarly situation because I grew up in the city and *the city is rough* was completely blown as I was being force-fed perspective. I cannot build my own house. I cannot work a 12 hour shift from 4 pm to 4 am. I cannot run two miles from police. I cannot make jelly and can it. Or drive a tractor. I cannot even throw a horseshoe right.

• • •

... and that concludes my column for this issue. Thank you for reading. If you like music, may I recommend the following titles, all of which I have found to be quite entertaining: Cave-In Jupiter and live, Semi-Automatic, Led Zeppelin BBC sessions, Joni Mitchell Summer Lawns, The Pandoras, new Primal Scream, Isis, Chic & The new Adeline Records comp.

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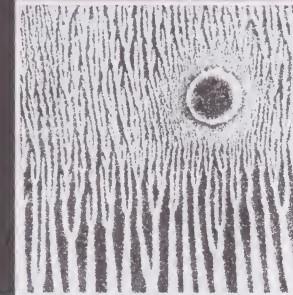
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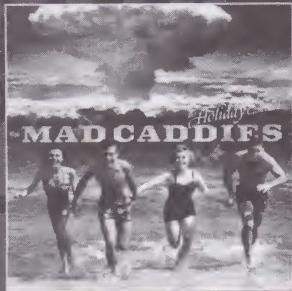
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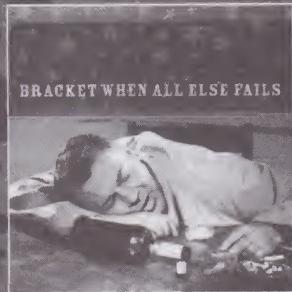
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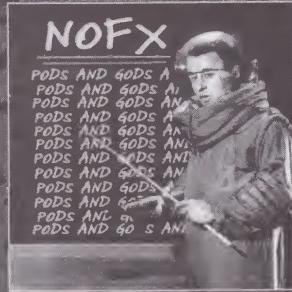
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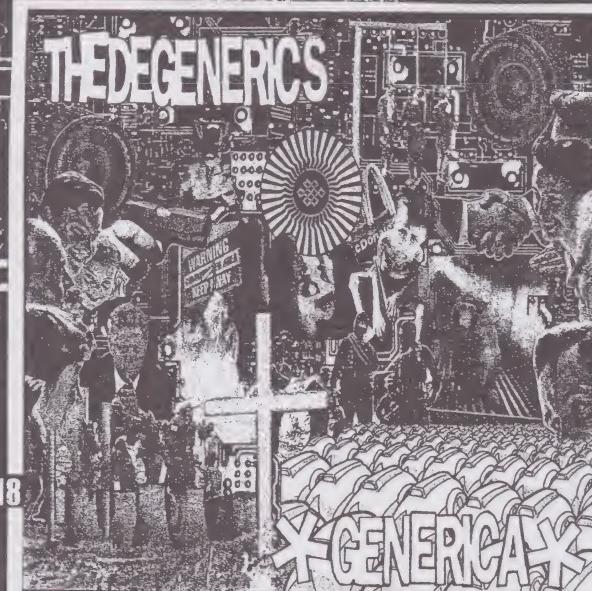
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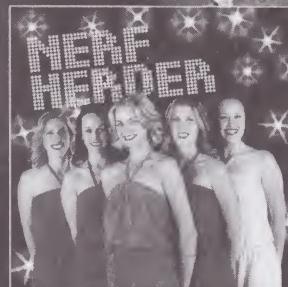
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KILL ROCK STARS SLIM MOON





I've never been a big fan of compilation records. But back in the early 1990s I let one rock my world. I'd never heard of the label. Hell, I wasn't even sure it was a label. It was simply this phenomenon called *Kill Rock Stars*. It seemed like a big "Fuck you" to the people who were celebrating the major-label signings of bands like Nirvana—who, ironically (or not) were on the record. From a pre-Sleater-Kinney Corin Tucker doing the best teenage vocals this side of Alex Chilton's Box Top days, to Nation of Ulysses bringing a punk aesthetic to vintage jazz, *Kill Rock Stars* let the listener know that there was a lot more going on in the world of rock and roll than *SPIN* or *MRR* were willing to tell us. Tracks on the album varied from soft abstraction to hard-as-nails confrontation, pointing collectively to the possibilities latent in a medium too frequently straightjacketed by A&R and magazine convention.

Over the years since I played that compilation into the ground, I've repeatedly come back to the *Kill Rock Stars* label, finding band after band capable of restoring my tenuous faith in rock. What sets *Kill Rock Stars* apart from other prominent independent labels is the continuity in their releases. Where labels like Matador and Sub Pop have seen their fare share of bands that put out one record and then move on to another label, *Kill Rock Stars* has retained the same core of Pacific Northwest music-makers in the face of intense media hype. It says a lot when bands like Bikini Kill and Unwound will spend their entire career on the label. Or when Sleater-Kinney will ward off the majors to stay at home in both a literal and metaphoric sense. You get a real sense of community with *Kill Rock Stars*, one that flat-out transcends the flaky platitudes of the music business.

Much of *Kill Rock Stars*' success can be attributed to its founder, Slim Moon. An accomplished performer in his own right, best known for his solo work in spoken word (1998's *Won't You Dance With this Man* CD, for example,) and his contributions to Refect Refect and Witchypoo, Slim founded *Kill Rock Stars* and has presided over its development with remarkable clear-headedness. As his words make amply clear, Slim is that rarity in the music world: someone capable of reconciling sensible business practices with high-minded ideals. *Punk Planet* caught up with Slim as the label was preparing to lend its support to Ladyfest 2000, a multi-day showcase of women in the arts taking place in Olympia in early August.

Interview by Charlie Bertsch



If you were going to tell the story of Kill Rock Stars to someone who only discovered your bands recently, what would you say?

When the label started, it was mostly local bands that either lived in Olympia or had a connection to Olympia. So, like a lot of labels, it began with me putting out my friends' music. The earliest roster was Witchypoo, Unwound, Bikini Kill, Heavens to Betsy, and Bratmobile. Huggy Bear was the first band who wasn't from here.

What led you to working with them?

They wrote to Bikini Kill with this idea of doing a split album. They didn't even know each other. They just were fans of each other's music. So Bikini Kill proposed that I put out their split album here. And there was a label in England that put it out over there. That led to us getting to know Huggy Bear and doing two more albums with them.

You're still pretty Olympia-centric. But what about the bands you've signed that don't have a tie to your local scene? What determines how you go about signing a band that you don't know well? And how do you balance your desire to remain rooted in your local scene with your desire to put out music from other cultural contexts?

There's a certain level of activity that we like to have on the label, a certain number of releases per year. Olympia is too small to actually provide that many bands. That's one answer. But the other thing is that we really believe in community—that hasn't changed at all. With 100 million households in the US and your average moderately successful underground band only selling somewhere between 2,000 and 10,000 records, the entire community of underground rock is pretty small. So I like to think of our "nationwide community." It doesn't just have to be the local community. We're still supporting the community when we put out a band from Detroit or wherever.

When people think of Kill Rock Stars, it's hard to overlook the prominence of women

on the label: Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, Huggy Bear, Sleater-Kinney and others. Was it merely an accident of circumstance that all these bands ended up on Kill Rock Stars? Or does their presence reflect a self-conscious effort on the label's part to develop female talent?

Being in Olympia has certainly been a big factor, because there are a lot of women involved in the scene here. But we just put out the records that we think are great or that we think are important. The truth is, the ratio of women to men in the bands on Kill Rock Stars is about 50-50. And I just think that's the way that it ought to be.

So from your perspective, the question should be redirected to the labels where this balance is missing. Why do you think are there so few female artists on those labels?

Very, very few other labels in our scene can say that they're 50-50. Almost all of them are really heavy on males.

Was there a moment when your policy of just putting out what's good or important inspired you to think, "You know what, just by doing the right thing, we have the opportunity to bring about fundamental change in the way that music made by women is described, distributed, and valued?"

There are points to make in response to that question. First, there's another side to my statement about Kill Rock Stars just putting out what we think is good. There are an awful lot of all-male bands doing really boring things. And it just turns out that women have been bringing a fresh and more passionate perspective to punk rock in the 1990s than guys have. So it's not just some affirmative action thing, where we decided to make it 50-50 in order to be fair. There are simply more cool bands with women contributing or fronting. ¶ The other point is that, between 1991 and 1994, there were really exciting changes in the underground music scene—you can't just use the term "Riot Girl"—as a result of conversations about gender, female-fronted bands that

were saying new things, or that were just of a really high quality. We were aware that we were part of that. And I am proud of any contribution that myself or Kill Rock Stars may have made to bringing those changes about.

Let's talk a little bit about your own personal history. How did you end up presiding over an underground record label in Olympia, Washington?

I'm originally from Montana, but I've spent my adult years in Washington.

Have your Montana origins had an effect on your music career?

I'm sure they've influenced me tremendously in ways that I can't even begin to understand.

Were you already into punk rock when you were living in Montana?

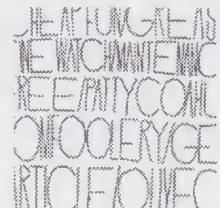
No. I got into punk rock in 1984, when I was living in Seattle. My musical tastes were shaped by college radio. I was particularly attracted to music from LA in the mid-1980s, everything from Green on Red to Black Flag. Those were the records I bought, stuff from the Paisley Underground and hardcore from California. But the shows I was exposed to were of a different order. They mostly fell into the category of proto-grunge: Green River, Poison Idea, Melvins, Malfunkshun, March of Crimes and Soundgarden when they were a trio.

So there was a little cognitive dissonance between the music you heard on record and the music you heard live.

Yes, although a lot of what was going on in Seattle was influenced by Black Flag's discovery of hard rock. When *Damaged* came out, every band in Seattle started to sound like it.

And how did you get from Seattle to Olympia?

I came down to Olympia to go to college—Evergreen was the only college I applied to, because I knew that Olympia had this cool all-ages scene. The bands were



wimpier, but more creative. There was too much cookie-cutter aggression in the Seattle bands, and not a lot of creativity. Olympia just seemed like a much more fun place. I'd go to shows in Seattle and everybody would be moshing in this really violent way. But then occasionally there'd be a show with bands from Olympia and Tacoma and all these people from down there would show up. And they would all dance in this way where there was contact, but it was really friendly and nobody was hurting anyone and everyone was having a great time.

How did the establishment of Kill Rock Stars come about?

I was in Olympia for a few years. I had a couple different bands. And what I really wanted to do was to just be a rock-and-roller. Then my second band broke up and the guy I had formed my first band with wanted to reform and move back to Seattle. So we reformed and I lived in Seattle for eight months. Then I quit that band and came back to Olympia. When I came back to Olympia, I had this fresh resolution to start a band that could go even if people quit—that's what led to Witchypoo. I was frustrated at putting a lot of effort into something and then having to start over whenever some flake decided that they were being spoken to by the gods on the other side of the universe, which is basically what happened with the band I quit. ¶ I also started a record label at that point, with the intention of putting out spoken-word 7"s. I was thinking of it as a hobby, because I had a little extra money from a state job I was working back then. But then, six months after I started the label, the International Pop Underground convention happened. My original idea was to put out a compilation of Olympia bands. A couple days later that evolved into a compilation including both Olympia bands and bands that were playing the convention. That was our first full-length, the *Kill Rock Stars* compila-

tion. Then came the Bikini Kill EP and the Unwound album. So we turned into a rock label really fast, despite the fact that I had initially intended to put out spoken word exclusively. The moment that I decided to start putting out rock records was Unwound's first show, because I knew that nobody would put out their record for a year or two and I felt that they were ready to have a record out right then. I got really enthusiastic and offered to put out their records.

And now it's almost 10 years later and in addition to Kill Rock Stars, you also run the subsidiary 5RC.

I hate the word "subsidiary." I prefer the word "sister." There's just a certain kind of record that we're interested in putting out, which we think the fans of that kind of music aren't really looking to Kill Rock Stars to find. So we feel that, if Kill Rock Stars puts out those records, the people who want to hear those records won't really know where to look. People don't associate Kill Rock Stars with that kind of music. So we thought, "Why not start a new label that has a clear identity that is all about this kind of music?" It's doing a favor for the fans as well as the bands.

So are you envisioning it as an avant-garde label, or would you not go that far?

Yes, I suppose you could say that it's avant-garde. But I think of the music on 5RC simply as stuff that's in the rock tradition without being retro at all.

The name 5 Rue Christine comes from the place Gertrude Stein lived in Paris. Her work gets read a lot more than it did a generation ago, but it's still pretty obscure by the standards of your average music lover. Why did you decide to use such a self-consciously literary reference?

Because I love Gertrude Stein and because she once made a bold claim that she had invented the 20th century. So maybe 5RC is trying to make a bold claim that we're inventing the 21st century.

It's interesting to me that Kill Rock Stars started out as a spoken word label. You've done a lot of work in that area yourself. What's with your affinity for spoken word?

I love spoken word. Sometimes I hate 70-minute long albums of spoken word and prefer shorter things, which is what I started out doing. The very first records I put out were 7"s of spoken word. But the honest truth is that we've sort of become a rock label. We still put out some spoken word when it's great and when the chance comes up, but not to the extent that I originally had in mind. I had this vision of really mining the spoken word vein, finding the people who were interested in it, and converting other people into fans. It would have taken a lot of effort, and we ended up spending a lot of effort on rock and roll. We're just not as good at selling spoken word records as I wish we were. ¶ For that reason we don't do as many spoken word albums anymore, I hate to have to say to the artist, "Gosh, I'm really sorry, but not nearly as many people heard your record as should have, because we don't know how to sell this record." A lot of times I'll pass on a spoken word record and hope that the artist finds somebody better. I like to believe that, in an alternate universe, I would have pursued my spoken word muse and built a spoken-word empire instead of starting a rock label. But that just didn't happen in this universe.

Does spoken word have a future?

I think the Internet is perfect for spoken word, because nobody is going to make any money off spoken word anywhere. The concern about which business model works best on the Internet doesn't apply in the case of spoken word, because it's not going to sell in substantial numbers no matter what you do. The only people who are really going to look for spoken word are the people who like it. And the Internet is perfect for them too. I think most spoken word artists just want to be heard. The point of putting out a spoken



We really believe in community—that hasn't changed at all. With 100 million households in the US and your average moderately successful underground band only selling somewhere between 2,000 and 10,000 records, the entire community of underground rock is pretty small. So I like to think of our "nationwide community."

Making money isn't what it's about. Therefore we can care more about the artist or the music. We can care more about aesthetic and political considerations...



word CD was never to make money, it was just to get it out there.

Have you considered distributing spoken word through your website?

We have thought about that. We've discussed having a section on our website that's essentially an MP3 label that either sells tracks really cheaply or gives them away—I think that's probably on the horizon.

We've talked a little bit about your experiences as a musician prior to starting Kill Rock Stars, but we haven't touched on your more recent work, whether in Witchypoo or as a solo artist. How does that fit into what you do at Kill Rock Stars?

I feel like I've been kind of half-assed as an artist during most of the time that I've been at Kill Rock Stars. Part of the problem is that I felt kind of weird about selling my own music. But I think that in the next decade you'll see me being a lot more active with spoken word and music than I have been in the past decade. Witchypoo is ending in July, so that means that the frontier is wide open. I couldn't tell you exactly what I'm going to do. I do know that I'm going to make a solo album this fall, which will probably come out in the spring. And I'm probably going to start a new band, though I don't have a clear idea of what it will be like. The perfect band to me would be a cross between Sigue Sigue Sputnik and Born Against. The closest anyone comes to that is Men's Recovery Project.

How has your own experience as an artist affected the way you run Kill Rock Stars?

I'm not sure that it has had that big an impact. There are several ways in which I identify myself: I'm a Montanan and I'm a punk rocker, but I don't really think of myself as an artist. Maybe as a spoken word guy, but never as a musician.

So you have no desire to achieve some absolute resolution into the unity of perfect being!

[Laughs] The problem that major labels have, that make them so boring and lame, is that they are 100% in the business to make money. They happen to make money by putting out records. Sometimes some of them are good, but a lot of them are crap. The luxury that a small company can have is that we don't have to answer to an annual meeting of stockholders. Our chairperson or CEO isn't going to get fired if our stock isn't paying enough dividends. So the real reason that Kill Rock Stars exists isn't to make money. We have to make money to keep putting out cool records, but making money isn't what it's about. Therefore we can care more about the artist or the music. We can care more about aesthetic and political considerations, rather than just where the bottom line is.

You mentioned "political considerations." Do you have personally and, by extension, through the label, some sort of political agenda, however vague and amorphous it might be? Obviously you're not a right-wing Christian. But does it go deeper than that?

I think that some of my own politics are expressed in the way the label works, but I can't speak for all the bands, of course. We haven't participated in any "agenda" politics as a label. But there's a sense in which everything you do is political. And we're aware of that. I wouldn't say we shy away from politics. We're not one of those ridiculous labels that will try to tell you that everything they do is *not* political.

So you're not going to give the pat answer: "It's all about the music."

Right. When you say music is more important than money, that's political right there.

So where do you see Kill Rock Stars headed in the future?

We've had some sort of cultural significance. We've been on the map with several things, one after the other, over the years in terms of the media. At one time it was Bikini Kill, now it's Sleater-Kinney. It's easy for a label that enjoys that sort of success to decide that the only course ahead is to get bigger and bigger and that a year in which they don't experience growth is a failure. This line of thinking leads to the conclusion that the only ultimate success is either to sell their company or half their company to some giant corporation for a lot of money or to be Epitaph and have huge mega-hits on their own terms. ¶ I look at things differently. In the life of most bands, there's a peak. If you're a career musician and you're going to play in public for 20 or 30 years, your peak is usually going to be in the first five. And you spend the rest of your career not being quite as famous as you once were, even if you're still making great music. So you spend the rest of your career feeling underappreciated because 10 years ago millions of people bought what now only 10,000 people buy. ¶ I'm really interested in people who are in it for the long haul. To me, that early success sets you up so you can keep going. I'm interested in how people conduct themselves and keep their morale up and continue to do interesting things over a really long period. I don't see why a label can't look at things the same way. Maybe we'll have more bands like Sleater-Kinney, or maybe we'll just keep putting out cool records of some interest to the people who want to seek them out. I think what's in the future for us is to really try to make a long-haul go of it, even if there are times when our tastes are against the grain or not what all the teenagers are listening to that year. ☺

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Mary Timony has always been one of my heroes, starting back in her days with Autoclave, through her second band, Helium and now with her solo work. Mary exuded a classy-lady confidence and was making music that transcended the narrow parameters of the independent scene, evolving from stark feminist angst to fantasy tone poems laced up tight with wonderfully elusive guitar lines. Recently, I had a chance to talk with Mary about her history and future.

Interview by Jessica Hopper

When did you first start playing music? What was your motivation?

I started viola lessons when I was in 3rd grade, but I never practiced, and I really didn't like playing it. When I was about 14, I picked up the guitar that my brother had gotten for Christmas, and tried to plunk out some notes on it. It totally didn't make any sense to me at all, so I asked my brother to show me some chords. He showed me a few open chords, and I would sit around for hours playing them, and practicing finger picking with my right hand. At school, I had a friend who wrote really depressing poetry. She and I got together and I would put the music to her really depressing lyrics, which was a kind of magical experience.

You grew up going to DC punk shows. Do you feel that you've been informed or influenced more musically or on a personal level by growing up amidst that?

I think I was very lucky to grow up around that scene in DC during the '80s. I realize now that it was a very special and rare thing that there were so many kids making music there and were totally excited about punk rock. Although I was around at the shows, I didn't really ever consider being in a band, because I came to music in a totally different way. It was something I did in my room, and something I studied in school, plus there were hardly any girls in bands there at that time, which seems strange now. It's hard to think that anyone is going to want to hear you play if you write really soft music and every one you know is hanging out thrashing around to hardcore.

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How old were you when you joined Autoclave? How did that happen?

I think I was 19 or 20. I knew Christina from going to shows in DC, and having mutual friends. She was the one who really got us going. Someone had given her a fretless bass, which she learned how to play. She somehow found Melissa who really is one of the most incredible drummers, and Nicky who had just learned how to play, but was really creative. We would practice a lot in the summer, and then I would go back to school in Boston.

Was it a conscious decision to play in an all-lady band?

I don't think it was a conscious "political" decision. It just felt right and made sense.

Autoclave had a brief but prolific existence, one which I think because of your peripheral existence during the riot girl period, a lot of people knew about. I read in some of your interviews that you felt like you weren't punk enough for riot girl. Did you feel a kinship to it? Was it something you wanted to be part of?

Autoclave started in 1990. That was around the same time as riot girl was growing, I think. When we began to play, there weren't any meetings or anyone really affiliated with it in DC. We were just doing our own thing. Then I remember I came home one Christmas from school, and Bikini Kill had moved to DC, and there was just this overwhelming presence of them there. I noticed that some girls in DC had started dressing differently, and I thought that was kind of funny. Soon enough, there were riot girl meetings happening. I think Christina was involved in it to a certain extent. I never went to a meeting, because I didn't really live in DC at that point. I just remember a lot of people being excited, and weirdly competitive with each other, but also feeling kind of inspired.

After Autoclave was over, was there anything in between, or did Helium start immediately? Did you hook up with Matador immediately?

Helium started about nine months afterwards, and the Matador thing happened about a year after that.

Your earlier records seemed more direct lyrically and musically. Was this just sort of where you were as a musician, or was it intentional? What were some of the things influencing you?

I guess that was just where I was at that point. I really wanted to make angry music.

In the press, your work has been totally disproportionately sexualized and you've been portrayed as a temptress or something. Then on *Magic City* it seemed that at least lyrically, things were shrouded in this sense of fantasy. Was that a conscious change or a reaction to having your work misinterpreted or speculated on? That it went from being from a more angsty, tangibly feminist point of view to what seemed like a "character" point of view. Was there something that spurred that shift?

I did get annoyed that a lot of people who wrote about us took my feminist ideas the wrong way, so I think the whole fantasy thing, was in a way just an abrupt turn away from anything that could be "sexualized." I felt like if it wasn't going to be understood, then there was absolutely no point in doing it at all. Plus, since I was used to being around other ladies who were friends who were all about the feminist thing. It was a huge hit in the face that there were many people out there who were threatened by it, and who thought of me as threatening because I talked about it—so much so that they would try to make me look weird in interviews. It was so gross. I try not to read anything that's written about the band, because it always makes me feel weird, but that was really,

really weird. That's part of it, but the real deeper reason, is just because totally angry music didn't appeal to me as much at that point as pleasing music. It was less about the performance and more about the actual sound. Plus the band's lineup changed, and Ash brought so many incredible ideas to it.

Did Helium end so that you could begin solo, or was it just a natural progression? You said Helium was pretty much your songs and your show so to speak.

I really just felt like doing a solo record, something more mellow and low key than a Helium record. That is why I made this last record. Helium has not really ended at all. I did want to change my sound, to have it be a little rawer.

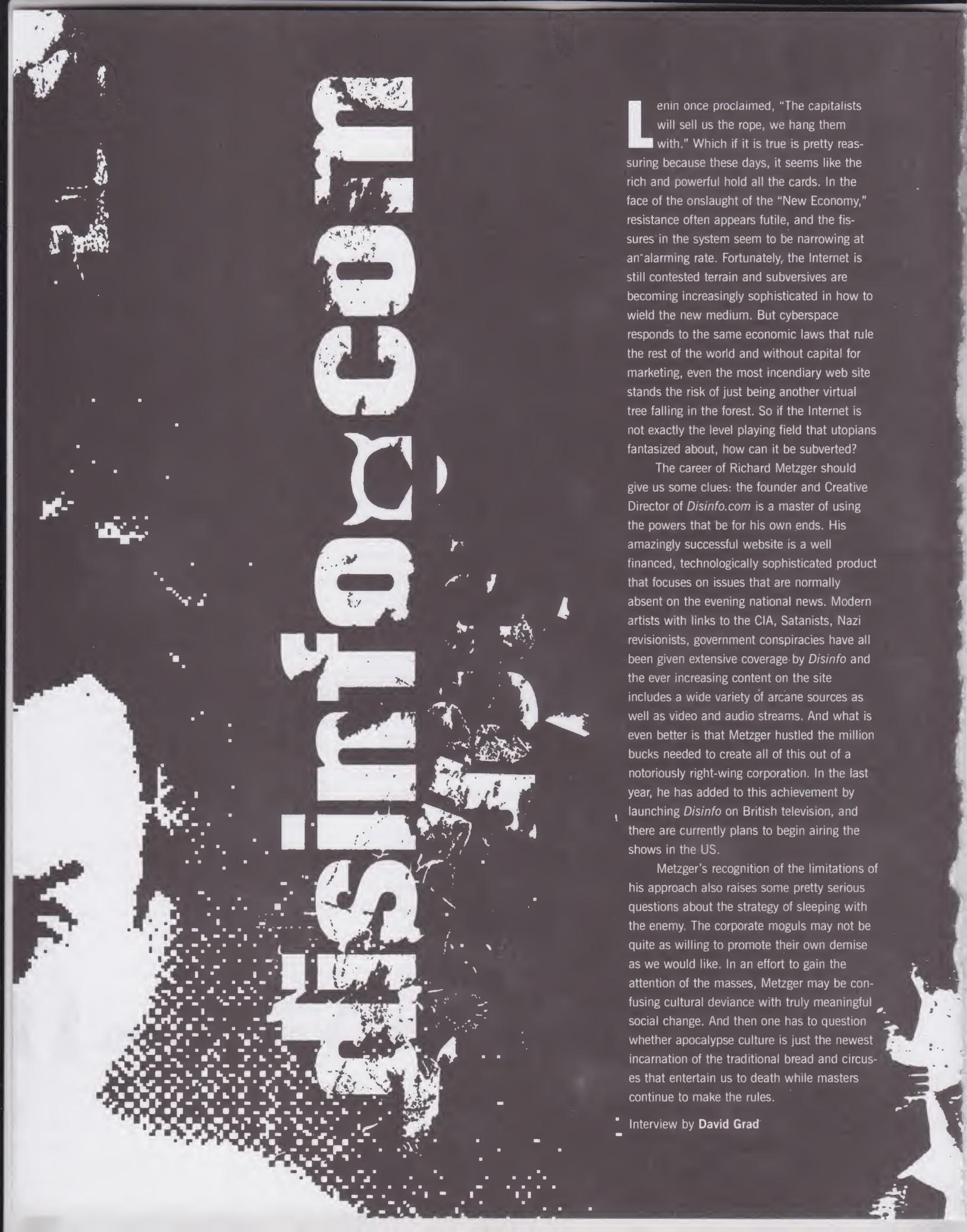
You also are in The Spells. What's that about?

That's all about my friend Carrie Brownstein and me writing songs together really fast. Actually I'm about to go out to Olympia in a couple days to work on Spells stuff.

What is your biggest hindrance or frustration in terms of making music?

Probably it would have something to do with not being able to totally replicate what I think I want to hear, or what I imagine musically in my head, because of a lack of instruments, of lack of money, or a lack of a 5,000 piece zither, piccolo, and tabla orchestra. The other frustration would have something to do with feeling like there are more interesting things I could be creating with my friends, musically. There is something so amazing to me about songs that come out of peoples' energy together, if that energy is good. ☺

**I FELT LIKE IF IT WASN'T GOING TO BE UNDERSTOOD,
THEN THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO POINT IN DOING IT AT ALL.**



Lenin once proclaimed, "The capitalists will sell us the rope, we hang them with." Which if it is true is pretty reassuring because these days, it seems like the rich and powerful hold all the cards. In the face of the onslaught of the "New Economy," resistance often appears futile, and the fissures in the system seem to be narrowing at an alarming rate. Fortunately, the Internet is still contested terrain and subversives are becoming increasingly sophisticated in how to wield the new medium. But cyberspace responds to the same economic laws that rule the rest of the world and without capital for marketing, even the most incendiary web site stands the risk of just being another virtual tree falling in the forest. So if the Internet is not exactly the level playing field that utopians fantasized about, how can it be subverted?

The career of Richard Metzger should give us some clues: the founder and Creative Director of *Disinfo.com* is a master of using the powers that be for his own ends. His amazingly successful website is a well-financed, technologically sophisticated product that focuses on issues that are normally absent on the evening national news. Modern artists with links to the CIA, Satanists, Nazi revisionists, government conspiracies have all been given extensive coverage by *Disinfo* and the ever increasing content on the site includes a wide variety of arcane sources as well as video and audio streams. And what is even better is that Metzger hustled the million bucks needed to create all of this out of a notoriously right-wing corporation. In the last year, he has added to this achievement by launching *Disinfo* on British television, and there are currently plans to begin airing the shows in the US.

Metzger's recognition of the limitations of his approach also raises some pretty serious questions about the strategy of sleeping with the enemy. The corporate moguls may not be quite as willing to promote their own demise as we would like. In an effort to gain the attention of the masses, Metzger may be confusing cultural deviance with truly meaningful social change. And then one has to question whether apocalypse culture is just the newest incarnation of the traditional bread and circuses that entertain us to death while masters continue to make the rules.

Interview by David Grad

**So what is Disinfo.com? What is the idea?
What is the program?**

It's an alternative news source. And because it is on the Internet—a new medium—it's a kind of a new journalism too. What I mean by that is that it is not dogmatic, it always clear what the editorial staff thinks, but it doesn't say you should think in any particular way: the bias is obvious, but it is not exclusionary. If we are covering a news story, the idea is not to show two sides but to present a much wider perspective. Our idea is that if there are two sides to every story, and the truth is somewhere in the middle, why not show 30 sides and see what happens?

What are the biases of the editorial staff?

I can't speak for everyone but it is pretty much a fairly libertarian: pro-drug, pro-sex, anti-bluenose, anti-authoritarian and anti-religious bias. It is pro-freedom and tends not to condemn—with the exception of condemning the aforementioned. We are very much anti-control freaks, in all its forms, whether that is Christianity or the drug wars.

**How did you develop the idea for
Disinfo.com?**

I was working for Jerry Brown's campaign in '91 and I would go to rallies with 10,000 people. I would read the various newspapers and you would see the same news event reported in so many different ways that it seemed like they were completely different events. Around the same time, I was reading a lot of conspiracy theory magazines. In '91 and '92, zine cul-

ture was also in full swing and I was totally immersed in thinking that there was some way to tie all this in together.

The first zines started appearing on the Internet in 1992.

I didn't get on the web until '95. *Disinfo* was originally developed as a TV show that Oliver Stone agreed to put his name on as executive producer.

So how did you get from the idea to Oliver Stone?

I cold faxed Oliver Stone and he had someone call back that day, he loved it. In fact he was in Thailand at the time filming *Heaven and Earth* and his assistant said, "He flipped out over your idea; he thinks it is amazing."

The idea was for a current events show?

No, the idea was to do the next generation of *60 Minutes* but with a very liberal-left bias. In a sense, Oliver Stone's name would have brought a lot to the proceedings but it would also have been detrimental because people would say it is wacko stuff or a conspiracy theory. The idea was to go against that by hiring investigative journalists like Seymour Hersh from the *New York Times* and Leslie Cockburn of CBS news—people who had a personal interest in getting these types of stories out but may have been frustrated by trying to do them through traditional news outlets. ¶ We wanted to do it in a way that would have grabbed a big audience—MTV style graphics—the kind of thing you have to do if you want a big audience. That was

the goal at the time but it did not happen, TV was not ready for it then. Despite Oliver Stone's involvement, nobody really wanted to buy it because they were wondering who would advertise.

What kind of stories did you want to work on?

During the original Bush campaign in 1988, there were a lot of people with neo-Nazi associations in the campaign. Other stories were on Scientology, the "anti"-religious right... Those kind of things.

Wasn't that also about the time that TV was getting hip to aliens?

Absolutely. As you can see by the time *Disinfo* actually got on the web, the *X-Files* thing was in the air. I thought that it made sense to put that element in as well to get a bigger audience—and it was something I was into as well. It was not a cop-out like, "Oh, let's put in aliens and have a mass audience." But there was an element of that because you have to candy-coat some information. Let's face it: Noam Chomsky is a conspiracy theorist and people who are interested in conspiracy theory would be interested in what Chomsky has to say if it were presented to them in a kind of fun and sexy way. How to find a way to lead people to this kind of information became a goal too.

Or in other words, you had to housebreak it?

Yeah, that is a great way to put it. Look at publications like *Z Magazine* or *The Nation*. Those venerable left magazines are never going to grow out of the circulation ghetto that they are in. But it doesn't have

Our idea is that if there are two sides to every story, and the truth is somewhere in the middle, why not show 30 sides and see what happens?



to be that way. Why is it that Republicans and right wing types have always found a way to make themselves entertaining like with Rush Limbaugh and his ilk?

Because the traditional left does not offer any viable solutions and their political agenda is predictable. It hasn't changed in 50 years.

The issue remains what you're going to replace the system with. So many times it has been like *Animal Farm*—"Here is the new boss, same as the old boss." Who cares if it is the Tsar or Stalin? It is still authoritarian and a lot of people are hip to that. When somebody comes along and says it's got to change, guess what they're going to replace it with? Themselves! ¶ The older I get [Metzger is 35], and frankly the more successful I have become financially, the more I look at things in different terms. When I was younger, my politics were very immature, kind of knee-jerk. I read *Maximum Rock' n' Roll* when I was a kid, and I look at that now and think, "Fuck could it have been anymore retarded?" Let's call it for what it is. It's politics on a 14-year old level. It's moronic and it's dogmatic. ¶ I am not saying 14-year olds shouldn't have political opinions, but there is a point where you grow up and realize that anarchy is only going to lead to someone imposing it on somebody else. Anarchism is a collectivist philosophy; it is not an individualist philosophy in any way. What is? Capitalism. People might say that I can think that because I have a fat bank account, but the truth is that people have to make compromises to live in a society that is so complex. And again, any ism tends to lead to authoritarianism

Back to the narrative: What happened with Stone?

We only took that program out for a few months and with no success on it, he was not going to keep beating a dead horse. It got to the right people, right away. It was being pitched around on the top levels of Hollywood. It was pitched directly to the head of HBO, Michael Fuchs. What we always heard was, "Wow! I would like to watch this myself but you will never get this on TV."

In 2000, do you think the situation is different?

I know it is because now I have a TV show in Britain and I think it is going to come here too. I think people are clamoring for it. We have 500,000 readers a month. That is lot of people. If that were a print magazine, it would be a medium sized print-magazine. It certainly has established a venerable brand on the web.

So how many episodes have you made for the British show?

We made six for the first series and we are going to make another 10 starting in July, which will probably be aired starting around Christmas. The idea was to do something along the lines of the web site. I haven't actually been editor of the web site for a year. When I started doing the show, I stopped doing it. But the things that interested me on the web was the more extreme stuff. I didn't want to make the show political. Eight years ago, it would have been, but now it is more cultural. So I contacted some of my heroes or people I wanted to meet and expose to a wider audience. ¶ I interviewed [conspiracy theorist] Robert Anton Williams for an entire show, [artist] Joe Coleman took me

on a tour of his collection of odd things—two headed monkeys, mummies and reliquaries that contain the bones of saints. He even claims to have a piece of the bone marrow of Christ in a reliquary that he bought in Venice two years ago. I asked Joe, "Do you really think that is the bone marrow of Christ?" And he said, "It doesn't matter, if it were worshipped as if it were then it is holy." And sprinkled in the interviews was an anti- McDonald's piece that I can't believe got on the air. If somebody is going to give me a half an hour of Broadcast Television, I'm going to hurl as much weirdness as I possibly can into their living rooms. I am going to take advantage of that; I am not going to wimp out.

Let's get back to the website. I always liked the story of how you got the funding for Disinfo.com

It was Oliver Stone intervening again. Back when CD-ROMs were all the rage, TCI had a company called AND Interactive. Oliver had a deal with them to provide CD content. He was going to hire somebody to executive produce it and I was asked if I wanted the position. I was working in a hotel in NY and doing drugs. I was not doing anything that made me happy, so I moved to LA and took the job. Then delay, delay, delay until everybody realized that the CD-ROM thing was not happening and it was going bust in the marketplace. So I was asked, "What would you do if we gave you \$100,000 to do a demo for the Internet?" ¶ So, using corporate money, everyday I bought \$400 worth of books. I found amazing counter-culture titles. I spread them like a grid along the floor of my apartment and I would walk around with a clipboard saying, "This

works. This doesn't work." At the end of two weeks I had a sixty-page document that laid out about four years worth of monthly content for a web zine. I took it back and they said, "Great!" The owners of AND knew what I was turning in. About 10 months later, TCI began to look at the AND books and said, "You have 70 employees. You have a burn rate of X hundreds of thousands a month and nothing is coming in. This web thing is a bunch of shit, we got fleeced." So they basically came in and shut down AND in August. ¶ At that point there were a video game, and *Disinfo*, both of which were 90% ready to go. The kicker was that a week before the accountants came in, I'd gotten *Disinfo* on the Netscape page, so when it launched, it launched big. It got a lot of attention. Around this time TCI started checking out what I was doing and I showed it to this guy. I took him through a demo that was all about aliens because obviously I wasn't going to take this corporate guy and show him the thing about how to cook up drugs, which was there too. He thought it was kind of an X-Files thing. It is, if you want to look at it that way, but it is many other things too depending on what door you want to walk in. Then another month went by and TCI's John Malone read about it in

Variety. Now, John Malone is a media magnate who is the head of a fifty billion dollar a year cable corporation which is now part of ATT. He didn't like what he saw, and demanded we pull the plug immediately.

What didn't he like?

Malone is a notoriously right-wing character—he is a big Rush Limbaugh fan. Malone believes there is a liberal media establishment that has it out for the likes of him. He is a Christian guy from Colorado. Can you blame him that he didn't want to support what he termed, "My anarchist bullshit?" There were stockholders paying for this! But when they said to me, "We are going to make this go away," I said, "No, you are going to give it to me." They said, "We paid for it," but I said, "In all the confusion with AND closing down I didn't sign an intellectual property rights agreement." You see I was going to make damn sure that I was going to wrestle that million plus dollars in development money for myself. I'd worked on this since 1992 and nobody was going to take it away from me. I also threatened to call the *Washington Post* and said, "At a time when TCI stock dropped from \$28 to \$13 a share you guys

have been funding this. Wouldn't it be hilarious if your stockholders knew you were a bunch of idiots who let a million dollars of their money get spent in a way that you don't even know about or approve of?" They took my point and half an hour later came back to me and said, "Fine, you can have it." So I got it back, returned to New York and hooked up with Razorfish, a large, independent media company.

What lessons do you draw from all this?

It doesn't happen all the time, but if these big corporations give, you should grab. I gave a similar speech at the *Disinfo* Conference in February, where I basically said, "This is an era where Hollywood and the media in general are looking for deviant entertainment because they know it is big money. In the wake of things like *South Park*, *The Matrix*, *Blair Witch*, they know they can't do it. In actual fact there is a very small pool of talent who can do these things and pull them off successfully."

So what does the future look like for *Disinfo*?

Five years from now, you'll be able to watch a speech by Noam Chomsky or a documentary about novelist Philip K. Dick. I want *Disinfo* to be a place where you can find this stuff. ☺

Anarchism is a collectivist philosophy; it is not an individualist philosophy in any way. What is? Capitalism. People might say that I can think that because I have a fat bank account, but the truth is that people have to make compromises to live in a society that is so complex.

... is a collectivist while ...







Sue Coe is called a political artist, but her best work moves on deeper frequencies than politics. Her most effective arrangements of content and form hit you so hard and fast, you don't have time to remember your political affiliations.

Coe began drawing as a child, and much of her work reflects her experience growing up female in working class England on the same block as a slaughterhouse. She is a deeply empathetic survivor who refuses to let the world ignore the majority of sufferers: children, animals, exploited immigrants, victims of the AIDS pandemic and others who have not been as lucky as herself.

Coe exposes evil in a way so breathtakingly effective only the sociopathic could miss

it. No one—be they anarchist, republican, capitalist or communist—wants to tell their children the story of the Imperial Food Products Poultry plant in North Carolina where 25 workers were killed in a fire they could have outrun had the fire-exit doors not been locked because the owner feared they might steal. Their dead bodies were found piled up at the sealed exits.

These are not left or right issues. They are issues that beg of us the courage to recognize evil. It's a recognition our fatuous Frappuccino and khaki-oriented society discourages. Coe eliminates "the graceful distance of miles" we like to put between ourselves and the crimes committed on our behalf. Kafka once said something to the effect of, "We read books that stab and wound us, that break the ice of the soul." Sue Coe's work is the best ice breaker I have yet encountered.

Interview by Peter Brandt

When do you think your art and your concern for human and animal rights converged?

I think it converged when the form became weighty enough to contain the content. In other words, I had achieved some level of ability over the form that I felt there was a good balance between form and content. For art to become a weapon, it first has to be art. I was always politically conscious since I could think, but I never really put that in the work because I felt I was still learning. I think at about age 35, I could actually start to draw—it became very easy for me. This is after years and years and years of doing it every day, and that's where commercial art has been very useful for me, because I draw every single day. I'm like seven jobs behind right now. Drawing every day makes me a strong draftsperson and gives me the confidence to inject that medium with the political content that I want to communicate.

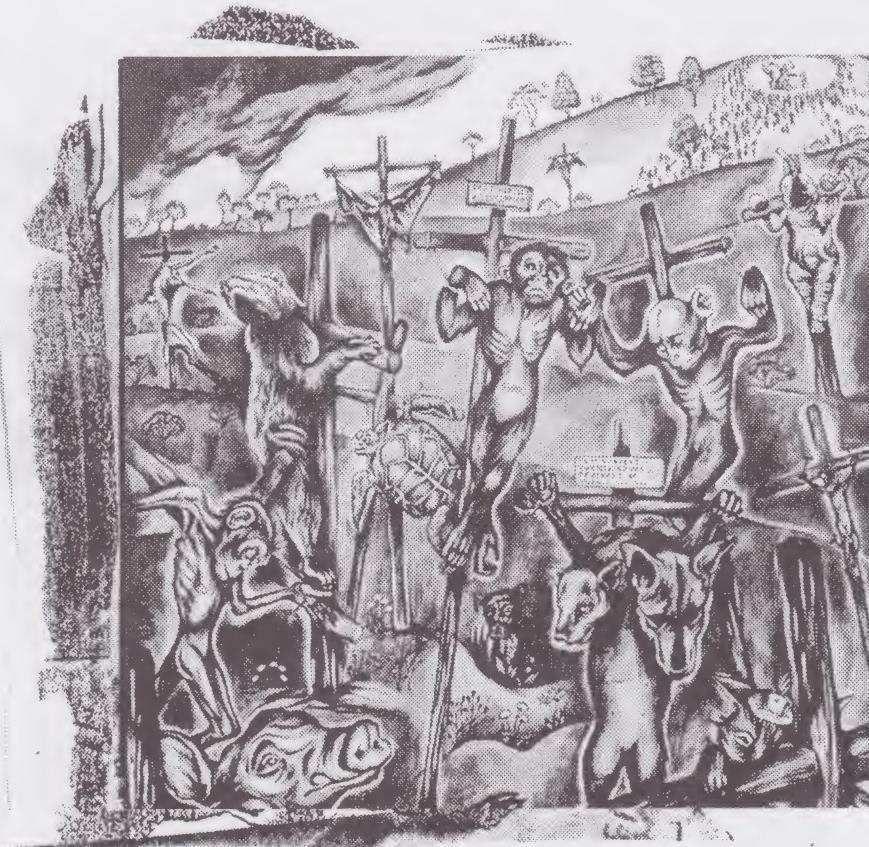
And do you think when they converged, it had any impact on how you actually went about drawing and printing and painting?

I think that changes all the time. A lot of the reasons people say my work is dark or gloomy, is because I only use black and white. Black and white is a much cheaper printing process. Also, when I started out working for magazines, I worked for the *New York Times*, and the *London Times* before that; this was all black and white editorial artwork. There's a certain elegance to black and white. There's an elegance and simplicity that lends itself to political content. Printmaking and drawing is black and white, and it's very cheap. You have a pencil. How much is a pencil? How much is a piece of paper? No, you don't need a

Macintosh; you don't need Photoshop; you've got tools that anyone in the world can use.

I've read that you used to sell prints on the street for \$5, or however much anyone could pay.

Yeah, and that's the same tonight, where it was \$20 or whatever you could pay.



Part of being an adult and not a child is that you can witness without power. That's what the majority of populations on earth have to do: they witness without power, they suffer with no recourse.

I'm interested in that because, in music for example, there's a lot of protest music, and the lyrical content doesn't really affect how the art is distributed.

But hip hop does, that is a new medium.

Yeah, there are people who make hip-hop tapes and sell them on the street. But then you have hip hop that goes out through Sony. I'm interested in how politics influences the way the art gets out.

Usually the artist doesn't have that much control over where the art is seen. No artist

chooses to be ghettoized. No culture worker chooses to just sell tapes on the street. Most artists would want the distribution of Sony, ideally. I wouldn't want to romanticize just selling stuff on the street; I think an artist or culture worker should take every opportunity they can to get the content through. I think a lot of political artists, whether they be musicians or painters, assume they won't be

acceptable so they don't even try. I'd like politically conscious people to try to get into mainstream media, but it's not easy. But certainly it belongs to the people as much as the street does. ¶ But this is part of the politicization: when you try and you see the resistance, you are politicized. To assume that Sony isn't going to take your work, you're not changing the system or changing yourself. It's when you try, and you see that "they"—the owners of the means of production—can not vocalize to you why they're censoring your work. It's interesting to see them fumble for the verbiage necessary to censor. The people in control of the content in this culture cannot vocalize why they're doing it. It's much more of an intuitive response. They know that this is against advertising, and is going to cause trouble for them. What's interesting to me is to get them to vocalize. Because what I get is, "Your work's too strong." And I'm saying, "Well, is it supposed to be weak? Do you want weak work? Do you want work that's not about the truth? What are you telling me?" So it gets them to have their position. It's a long, complicated answer, but I think we have to try.

So many people don't even get an answer when trying to talk to Time Warner or Sony or some other big mainstream kind of thing. I think they just avoid going on the record. Like when your bar-room gang rape painting ended up tucked away in the dark hallway at the Museum of Modern Art: I'm sure they wouldn't want to sit down and talk with you about why your painting was sidelined.

Absolutely not. But the fact is, it was. You saw the *Dead Meat* book. That was rejected by every single publisher in the United States. So then I just started back again. I went through them again and I said, "Just as a learning experience for me, I want to know why you rejected this. Could you tell me?" And then they couldn't. What are they going to say? And yes, I am presuming there is a certain level of communication between me and them that maybe a younger artist does not have. But you know I was young too, and this is how you struggle. This is how you try.

I worked on a campaign in California that banned leghold traps. We'd get supporters who would call up and complain that they were disturbed by the pictures we used of animals in leghold traps. And recently up here, the Makah tribe killed a grey whale, and the media wouldn't show all the footage of the kill because it was too graphic. Do you think anybody, even those of us working on animal and human rights issues, have a right to be shielded?

I just generally think that it should be the truth. Again, it's about the contradiction that people want resolution. They cannot live

with being a witness and suffering with being a witness. And that is something I've thought about, and I think that's a Western attitude. Western people cannot witness without power. In other words, they don't want to see suffering unless they have the power to change it. So they say, "I don't want to go into a slaughterhouse, because what am I gonna do?" So they won't even go to the

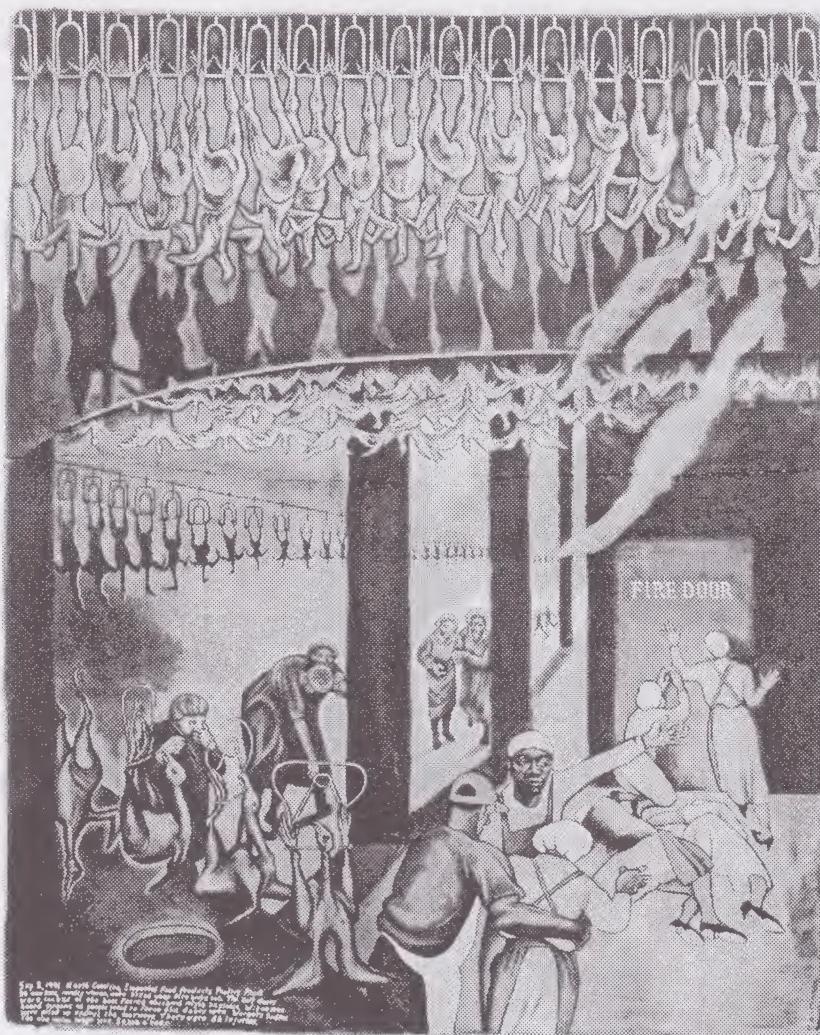
me laugh. It was about my vivisection work and it said, "This work isn't even real." And I thought, "But if it was real photographs of animals being vivisected, you wouldn't even be reporting on it." Also, we don't have photographs because you can't get into the labs. So I mean, very much a part of America is that you cannot show the problem without immediately having the solution. And with a

lot of the [animal protection] mailings, they show the animals and you just have to send money. But that's not good enough. It's like, "See suffering, send money." I think what the animal movement is about is empowering people. I mean, it's one of the very few political movements where you can actually change your life, and you can actually help animals. It's not some abstract "vote for Clinton or Gore." You can control what you put in your mouth. You can be conscious of what you're doing. It's a much more empowering political movement than just abstract information.

I wanted to ask you about something you wrote in *Dead Meat*: "Every dollar I get

drips with blood too." Does that have to do with your commercial work?

Sure. I think that we're all complicit in this society. What we can say is that we aspire to be better, and that's the best we can do. But we live in this state of capitalism where our existence is at the exploitation of other worlds. We are on this pyramid, but we must be conscious of that and aware of that to change it. I think everyone knows that in some subliminal way. ☺



stage of being in a position to watch the whale die, and to be a silent witness, which I think is part of our growing up. Part of being an adult and not a child is that you can witness without power. That's what the majority of populations on earth have to do: they witness without power, they suffer with no recourse. If people don't want to see the bobcat with its paw in a trap or they don't want to see the whale, that has to be examined on a deeper level: why not? ¶ I got this review in the *New York Times* that just made

The bottom line is that everything that we deal with is socially constructed, thus we should also be able to construct alternatives that work

Take ambient sounds recorded at political demonstrations such as those held at last November's WTO meeting in Seattle, combine them with activists' diatribes taped onsite, and mix them all together with electronic sounds and ambient music. What you get can only be called an audio-cinematic depiction of the process of resistance so thoroughly involving that it makes you almost feel as though you were there. Not to mention the essence of an Ultra-red song.

Ultra-red is a six year old acoustic activist collective roughly based in East Los Angeles. I'm hesitant to use the term "music" for one simple reason: What Ultra-red does defies categorization in that way. Why? Because their truly revolutionary recordings attempt to forge a relationship between sound, physical space and political activism in order to make the listener feel like they're physically participating in ongoing struggles for social justice.

Without attaching themselves to any one party or dogma, over the course of two CDs and one EP released on Oakland's Comantonse label, and Germany's highly regarded Mille Plateaux, Ultra-red's documentary-style work forces us to expand our notions of what political protest music ought to really sound like. When I first heard their *Structural Adjustments* CD, I thought that activists and demolition workers were battling in my hotel parking lot, and I went looking for my gas mask.

Not long after London's May Day demonstrations, I had the opportunity to talk to Ultra-red about what goes into making their *radical* new music. The following fascinating conversation about rock and roll, Marxism and, of course, contemporary politics is what transpired.

Interview by Scott Schaffer

There's a fairly rich tradition of political collage bands—I'm thinking of groups like Negativland, Evolution Control Committee, and The Christal Methodists. But while their work is intentionally collaged from a wide

variety of sources, your work seems more in line with what a band like Einsturzende Neubaten did—to take sounds from the factory and use them to critique Western industrialism. How would you place yourselves in a political, musical, and intellectual tradition?

Pablo Garcia: I don't think Einsturzende Neubaten made any political commentary with their sound explorations. I think their music comes from a "sound for sound's sake" position. That is not true in our case.

Leonardo Vilchis: In terms of a political or intellectual tradition, I think that it depends on the members, and it fluctuates with the conditions. If anything, I would say that I have taken a side with the workers, the poor, the excluded. I have been influenced by Critical Theory, Structuralism, Latin American Popular Education and Liberation Theology and third world revolutionary movements. I think that the system is fucked up and that we should never stop thinking our utopian vision of a world where freedom, equality, peace and justice prevail. I believe that this world must be created with the excluded and oppressed as the point of departure and that it can be created in a way where everybody is a participant in its creation. ¶ I think that the work of Ultra-red is an expression of that utopian idea at many levels, because of who participates in the creation of the sound, the aesthetics that critique the production of art and sound, and because of its mixture of media. I don't know where I would put all of this in any tradition.

Dont Rhine: From the very beginning, those of us who began Ultra-red were interested in a social critique of ambient music. Ambient music as either predetermined capitulation to ubiquitous consumer capitalism or as potential negation of that ubiquity. I've always had this image in my mind of a practice of ambient

music that does to the genre what Marx did to Hegel—restored an antagonistic component without which all of its idealism and fluffy clouds. From John Cage to Brian Eno through the vast majority of ambient or electronic music, the evocation of everyday life serves as a means of capitulation to existing power relations and not resistance. Resistance is futile—the mantra of so much cultural studies, whether academic or artistic. ¶ But for a resistant ambient music to have any sort of "use value," it can't be a simple imposition of political themes on existing musical styles. The point has to be the methodology itself: the way the sound becomes music. So for us, we accept electronica's rejection of sloganeering—so-called "radical" lyrical content sung by rock stars. I just don't believe that mode of musical production exhausts the artistic possibilities in our historical present—at least from the perspective of genuinely rethinking the relationship between human labor and capital. ¶ What Ultra-red is working with at the present is a way of situating musical practice within political organizing. Do we go around the country touring rock clubs as a poor substitute for community organizing, or do we assign our organizing the rubric of musical practice? For this reason, Ultra-red has more members who consider themselves community organizers than musicians. It also explains why we have little affinity with media art. Our motivation is less an alienated experience of technological saturation than the social experience of building working class power. I'm aware that all this potentially sounds pretentious, except for that fact that we work very hard putting notions of "genuineness" and "authenticity" to social use. In an age of postmodern irony, that's not very fashionable. "Street credibility" has an almost kitsch value to it.

and deconstruct/demolish alternatives that work *for* people, not against them.

ULTRA-RED

Unless its political content—building working class power against capital power—is restored.

The issue of construction seems to be a big theme in your records—the construction of physical and social space and of control over that space; the construction of the actual recording; and the construction of a community of like-minded individuals. These are the same kinds of issues that are coming to the fore in groups resisting globalization, “free trade” and other evils of the world.

Pablo Garcia: It's funny, because Dont and I just spoke about how the overall theme of our current works based around recent protests in Seattle and DC are going to require that the resulting Ultra-red material be more celebratory, less introspective, and more about people getting together and off their asses. Take off your headphones and go outside, listen to the world around you!

Leonardo Vilchis: The bottom line is that everything that we deal with is socially constructed, thus we should also be able to construct alternatives that work and deconstruct/demolish alternatives that work *for* people, not against them.

What I like most about what you do musically is that you seem to waver between telling people that they need to be out in the streets and depicting the struggles of those who are in the streets in ways that people can understand. What kind of ethic do you feel you're trying to communicate?

Leonardo Vilchis: Critical Action for Justice. It is critical because it negates the present reality and calls people to negate, reflect and critique the present conditions. It is part of the action necessary to produce alternatives and it is a reflection of those actions, and it is not neutral. It seeks to make justice and assumes inequalities that must be remedied.

Pablo Garcia: I really don't think that the music is a call to arms. I think a better way of saying it is by characterizing it as a call to presence. I hope the music is an invitation.

Dont Rhine: A presence that never comes naturally, or inevitably. Yeah, an accurate way to describe our intentions is both as action and evocation. ¶ In some respects, what you're describing in your question speaks to the material quality of the recorded medium itself. In other words, I would say, "What we do musically," as you describe it, identifies the dual functions of the recorded medium: first, how it both represents space and events and second, how upon playback, the record produces space. Working in an ambient music milieu and radicalizing its conventions, we're hoping to utilize both functions. ¶ Most politically-engaged pop music only addresses the first function of recording: representing something. In which case, lyrical content is paramount. The actual political implications of playback—sound's ability to produce space—gets attention only to the extent of rock music conventions of angst, aggression, rebellion. Thus, the space produced is fully accommodating to a culture industry determined to preserve itself by presenting the consumer product as a sign of rebellion. For a good many well-intentioned artists, this is good enough. Or, they conceal the accommodation by displacing it onto the realm of independent distribution—the notion of radical entrepreneurs. I'm not about to say these tactics are politically ineffective or "hollowed out" by consumer capitalism. Artists like Ani Difranco and Rage Against the Machine do reach a huge number of people. But I do think certain ways of producing music miss the incredible opportunity of how the recorded medium as sound produces space. ¶ For us, again, turning the Cagean logic right-side up,

sound-as-a-production-of-space affords the artist the opportunity to radicalize the site of audition. Hearing a recording about public housing residents fighting for fair housing creates an ambience where the listener confronts their own complicity in ways that mere lyrical content can't. People describe the experience as "cinematic" or "immersive" when what they're really describing is an experience of social space composed out of the relationships between people. ¶ As far as political messages, we're not about recruiting people. We're not party people. Our capacity to work as an affinity-styled group is incompatible with party uniformity. At the same time, the first step to taking collective political action is a renewed awareness of your own material conditions. That is the greatest challenge, figuring out how your work can actually have use to the communities you work with and then finding a new use for the work when it reaches a larger audience thanks to a consumer product. ¶ Take the *Structural Adjustments* CD; those tracks have a history that is inextricable from the lives of the Union members. But what happens when a CD is compiled and bought by folks in Germany, the UK and New York City? In some respects, the political life of the project gets lost to alienated consumption. In another respect, the listener becomes immersed in a soundtrack where people are fighting with their lives for public housing. This is exactly the matter I mentioned earlier: where the sonic production of space creates an ambience where it becomes possible to start thinking. Why should people have to compete for shelter? Why should the ability of a few to make a profit determine the quality and access to housing for us all? I believe the only way we access those questions is to gain an awareness of our own everyday situation. ©

THE CENTRAL OHIO ABORTION ACCESS FUND

If we are \$25 short for a woman's procedure, we *will* get it. We call everyone we know, and say, "We need five dollars."



American women today have fewer rights to abortion than at any time since the Roe v. Wade decision legalized abortion in the US in 1973. Many states have laws that require that young women have their parent's consent in order to have an abortion; most states impose a 24-hour waiting period for women seeking abortion procedures; and 89% of all counties in the United States have no abortion provider. As if these legal restrictions weren't enough, since 1976 women receiving Medicaid have had to pay for abortions out of their own funds, and most insurance plans do not cover the cost of abortion procedures. The Central Ohio Abortion Access Fund was founded in the fall of 1998 to improve access to abortion, under the slogan "Without Access, There Is No Choice." Since that time, they have assisted over 200 women—by providing financial assistance, housing, transportation, and childcare. I spoke with two of COAAF's members, Melissa and Trisha, on the day they were officially recognized as a non-profit organization in the state of Ohio.

Interview by Jon Strange

Illustration by Dustin Mertz

Even though you are an abortion access fund, you don't limit your services to financial assistance. Why did you decide to do that?

Melissa: Not having access to abortion is not always about financial constraints, it is sometimes about not having a ride to the appointment, not having a baby-sitter, or not having a place to stay if you have to go far away for your appointment. It's hard enough to come up with the actual money for the abortion procedure. There are a lot of women that we just talk to, that don't need money, don't need childcare, don't need lodging or anything—they just don't know who to call. They get our number from somewhere, and want to know, "Who do I call, what do I do, how does this work," and we talk them through it. There are a lot of calls like that actually. So we have become a referral source as well.

I think that kind of work is really important—it often seems that the battle has become one of information. The fact that Ohio just rejected money from the Center for Disease Control for comprehensive sexuality education makes it all the more likely that "abstinence only" education is all that will be taught. It just takes away those resources – it is a battle of information.

Melissa: That's why we are waging war on that.

I'm sure there are challenges to being a small organization, but do you think there are advantages to it as well?

Melissa: It is certainly an intimate group. There are a lot of advantages—I think that we communicate better because we are a small group.

Trisha: I think that we are very politically like-minded too. It is very frustrating, personally, to work with someone who is maybe more conservative. When I have a passion about something, and I'm doing it because I love it, if someone was going to

trample on my ideas because it's just not mainstream enough, it makes me not want to be involved. It is hard to be dedicated to something that you don't feel you have a lot of say in.

Yet just today you went legit, by registering as a non-profit organization in the state of Ohio. Why did you do that?

Melissa: The main reason we are doing this is to help women, and in order to do that there are certain steps that need to be taken, no matter what we feel personally. Politically, I don't want to work within the confines of some sort of government statute but at the same time, I want people to donate money to us and people are not going to donate money to us unless it is tax deductible. And people are *certainly* not going to donate money to us unless we look like a legitimate organization. In order to do that, we need the backing of a non-profit status. It's really hard to justify it in your head, but it goes back to helping as many people as possible, and in order to do that, I need to work within that system in that way.

Trisha: Ever since I thought about starting a fund in Columbus, I never doubted that I wanted a non-profit status for the fund, because I just knew that it was necessary. The need is too great, and we cannot raise enough money from punk shows and selling books—it's just not possible! We want to help as many women as we can.

Melissa: Yeah, we have to participate in that structure, but at the same time, the organization that we have is very radical in its nature. It's a direct action in that its nature is contradictory to the government structure that we have to work in.

That's a huge relief to hear. A lot of times in the punk world, and the activist world, we are concerned with the aesthetic of being radical, rather than the reality of being radical.

Melissa: Exactly, which is what punk activism tends to be all about.

Absolutely. Part of my definition of radicalism comes down to addressing issues in the most efficient and effective way. If this is what you need to do to get as much money as possible, then it's good that you did. What are the hoops that you have to jump through to get non-profit status?

Melissa: We were lucky because we are covered under a blanket status with the National Network of Abortion Funds, but we still had to come up with our articles of incorporation and bylaws. It was a huge, traumatic process because it's a very hard language to master. We were fortunate enough to find somebody who was really interested in learning about that, so she did it for us. They had to be submitted to the Secretary of State's office in Ohio, and we met with so many problems. We finally just decided that it was probably because the Secretary of State of Ohio, Ken Blackwell, is anti-choice, and that probably had something to do with it because it really took us a year and a half, almost.

You've now mentioned the National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) a few times—what kind of support do they provide to you?

Trisha: NNAF is based in Amherst, Massachusetts, and basically, they network most of the abortion funds in the US. They don't actually assist women directly, they assist funds like ours so that we can assist women. They are very supportive of the work that we've done. We could not have gotten our bylaws written without them. It's nice because it's a pretty autonomous group. Every fund in the network is a little bit different. So, we can still be a part of this network, but don't have to adhere to any of their rules or regulations—we just do it with how we are most comfortable.

How many funds are in the network?

Melissa: Between 50 and 60, I think we were 49 when we joined. There are some noticeable areas of the country that don't have funds, and then there are some areas that have like five funds.

It is sort of a surprise to people that there are so many, because they think that not many people know about these resources.

Melissa: Certainly, if we had the budget, we would make ourselves widely known, but until we have the money to help everyone who calls us, we don't want to say that we are available to help people, and then not be able to.

I'm sure that as an organization that is designed to give away money, it's a constant problem—how do you balance the mission of giving away money to people with making sure that you have money in the future?

Melissa: We are not very good at that right now. I don't think...

Trisha: We ran out of money for six months.

Melissa: Running out of money is something that we often do. We run out of money, and then we'll somehow get a private donation or have an event or a book sale that gives us a little more money back. Then we'll have extreme cases, and will give that money away again. It's hard. We don't have enough money, ever. Whatever happens, we have a basic amount that we help each woman with and then our bank account gets lower and lower.

Trisha: We supposedly never give away more than half of what we have. The idea is so that we don't run out of money, but of course we do.

Melissa: It's frustrating, but it's not like we have money that just disappears, it goes because somebody needed it. If we are out of money, it is because we are at zero in

the bank, it's not because we have \$100 and we don't want to risk losing that. I think that has a lot to say about the politics of our group. We will always give money away. If we are \$25 short for a woman's procedure, we *will* get it. We call everyone we know, and say, "We need five dollars." The first person we helped, we did it that way. We called everyone and eventually we got it together.

What criteria do you have for deciding who to help, or how much money to give to a client?

Trisha: That's a really hard question.

Melissa: We have certain basic areas that have priority, people that are in domestic violence situations, and people that become pregnant as a result of rape or incest. Homeless women, young women, HIV-positive women—there are other criteria that need to be met, but if people within one of those categories call us, we will help them, no questions asked.

Do you make grants only, or do you do loans?

Trisha: Most of the time, I would not expect the women who call to pay us back, because a lot of the women that we talk to have children, are unemployed, hitting public assistance, and that is their only income. They can't afford five dollars a month to pay us back—they can't—and I would never expect it. I would never ask them to not feed their kids or pay their bills so that they could pay us back. The thing that is *really* hard about doing intake is that when I talk to a woman, I have to think, "If I give this money to this woman, who am I going to have to say 'no' to?" When I have had to say "no" to a woman, I feel like I just ripped my heart out. ¶ I think that one of the most important things is for women to have the *option* of paying us back. To feel like this isn't a hand out, and that if they

need a grant, I would be happy to give it to them. I don't feel that they should feel shame about that, but there are some women who feel like they need to pay it back, even if it's just five dollars a month for the next however many months.

Melissa: How can I justify giving money to somebody, and denying somebody else, when I know that the first one can come up with the money? That's the hardest thing about intake—I have not been able to say, "No we can't help you, your situation doesn't fit our criteria, and you don't sound like you need the money." What a horrible thing that would be to hear!

What a power dynamic that sets up!

Melissa: Exactly, and that is why probably at least 95% or more of the money we give out is grants, and we don't expect anything back. I think that we have gotten one payment back.

From the perspective of political rhetoric, it is really useful for us to use some of the extreme stories about the threats to a woman's right to choose. But the story that we don't hear often enough is probably the much more common story about the woman who lives upstairs, who's a waitress, and her roommate moved out this month, and she just doesn't have the funds. I think it's really important for us to emphasize how common it is for women to have abortions. If current trends continue, soon we will be at the point where 50% of 45-year-old women will have an abortion at some point in their lives. I tell that to people, and they don't believe it—they think that only "those" people do it.

Melissa: Right, we have a number for sure, that an average of 36,500 Ohio women have had an abortion this year. That is a big number. I don't think that people think that it is as common as it is—they



There are a lot of women that we just talk to, that don't need money, don't ne

don't think that their neighbor, or their sister, or their cousin, or their mother, could possibly have an abortion, or is in the process of making that decision.

Trisha: That is one of the reasons that I love talking to the women that I do intake with, because I tell them that I've had two abortions, and it's not the worst thing that you are going to go through in your life. The sense of relief afterwards is just amazing. It's something that a lot of us go through, and we survive it, and come out stronger for it.

We have talked about many layers of restrictions to access, be they legal, financial, or geographic. Are you optimistic about these restrictions going away? Do you think things are going to get better?

Melissa: I think that they are going to get worse. I think honestly that a lot of it depends on the presidential election. We have a Republican governor in Ohio. We are looking at the possibility of a Republican president. If that happens, who knows? It is terrifying what is going to happen to not only to access to abortion, but even to the *legality* of abortion. That is an immediate threat. George W. Bush doesn't like abortion, and the next president is going to name two to four Supreme Court justices, who could eventually overturn *Roe v. Wade*. It is terrifying.

Trisha: I think about the fund in a lot of the same ways as I view JANE—the underground collective in Chicago that provided abortions for women, regardless if they could afford them, before abortion was legal. They have been a very big inspiration to our work and if...

Melissa: We are going to do what we are going to do.

Trisha: Well, we would never do anything

illegal, but we are going to do what we need to do. Abortion is becoming so restricted that it might as well be illegal. The reality is that there are not going to be doctors to do abortions, and then there isn't going to be any more abortion. Doctors are afraid to do abortions now. They are afraid to go to work and they are also afraid because in the medical community, there is a lot of disrespect for people in the abortion field—RNs, doctors. A nurse that I know that works in the abortion field, when she started looking into working in an abortion clinic, she found nursing journals with articles in them about abortion—but all that she could find were articles about nurses' rights to refuse assisting abortions. That is all that she could find, and it is very scary, very scary. There are not very many young doctors that do abortions.

I think that despite the mountain of restrictions to access that has piled up, there are still really inspiring examples of people working against that, and I think that COAAF and other funds definitely contribute to that work.

Trisha: I think that we have really made an amazing difference in a lot of women's lives. I think that we have saved a lot of women from desperate, potentially lethal situations. Especially when you are talking about women in domestic violence situations. There was a woman who we saw who was in a very bad domestic violence situation. I ran into her about a year later, and found out that she has left her abuser. Realizing that we were there for her, is realizing that there is one less woman getting the shit get kicked out of her. That is enough for me, just one.

What kind of impact has doing this work had on each of you?

Trisha: A lot of impact, a lot of impact. I have spoken to some of the most amazing

women through the fund. It just inspires me so much to see so much strength in women. That is one of the most amazing things that I have gotten out of the fund—the personal connections that I have made with women that keep on motivating me.

Melissa: It definitely gives me a better perspective on things. To listen to all these interesting and unique stories, makes me realize how much work needs to be done, and what needs to happen in this world to make it a better place for women in general. It definitely fuels my passion for activism in general and for direct action specifically.

Trisha: I think that it is very empowering for me, personally, as a woman who has had abortions before, to be able to sort of give back to the people who supported me through my experience. I feel that I get to put that energy back out there and help other women. When one of their friends comes to them, they will be able to be supportive of them.

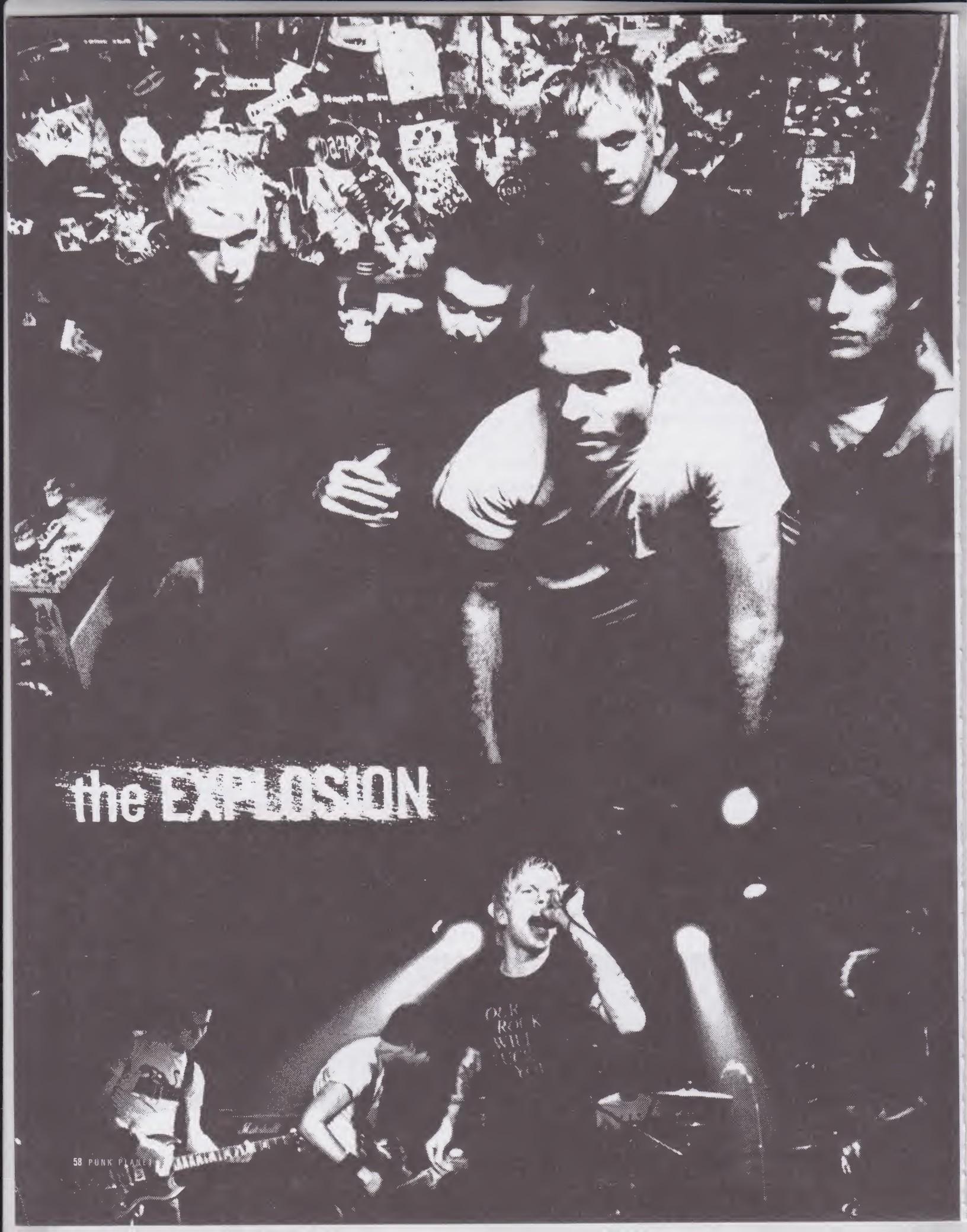
Would you advise other people to start a fund?

Trisha: Absolutely, please! The need for financial help is overwhelming, and it is very important for there to be more funds out there that provide financial assistance.

Melissa: People who consider themselves activists, who consider themselves radicals, need to realize that what they need to be doing is direct action. I think that the reason that we have a hard time getting people to volunteer with us is because we are direct action, and people are uncomfortable with that. The idea of directly helping somebody who needs an abortion, instead of standing outside the state house with a sign, it is really uncomfortable for people. You have to get personal and you have to get involved. I think that is something that needs to be stressed. ☺

ed childcare, don't need lodging or anything—they just don't know who to call.





the EXPANSION

Punk rock, as a musical style (in the strict, short-fast-loud sense of the thing), is a lost breath that you don't ever get back, a night out, a middle finger; it should be direct, basic, and inspiring. It doesn't matter how much virtuosity people play with or how well-intentioned people are, a punk band either gets on stage and goes click, or they don't. Meet The Explosion: They have 30 years of three chords and an attitude chasing them through every song. The question becomes, how do you approach something done so many times before? How do you make people forget their record collections? You'd better have the songs, and you'd better make it hard for any band to get on stage after you're done.

The Explosion are a five-piece group from Boston whose debut album, *Flash, Flash, Flash* (Jade Tree), is a half-hour long and it's all pissed-off, pissed-up, last-night-of-your-life-desperation, with a hope for something better tomorrow implied in every song. It is also—perhaps most importantly—the knowledge that punk rock might not change the world, but it can definitely change your life.

The band started as a four-piece about a year ago, with singer Matt Hock, guitarist Dave Walsh, drummer Dan Colby, and bassist Damian Genuardi. They added new guitarist, Sam Cave, in between the release of their debut EP and *Flash, Flash, Flash*.

The band's development was slightly stunted before they ever released a record, however, when Revelation Records, the label that Damian's other band, In My Eyes, is signed to, confronted him and The Explosion with the threat of legal action, due to a breach of contract. Luckily for them, and for punk rock fans, all that has been settled (read below for the details), and we will all get to hear their pipe bomb of a debut. The Explosion will be on tour with Cave In for most of the summer, and will continue touring into the fall with the Queers, and Leatherface.

Punk-rock feather in Jade Tree's ever-eclectic cap? Street punk for kids who don't really like street-punk? Does it matter? When they play, it can be like a bomb going off in your heart, and can you really ask anything more of a punk rock band?

Interview by Chris Ryan

I noticed right off the bat that the EP seems a lot darker than the album. And the album seems to have a stronger sense of melody. What do you guys see as the biggest differences between the two records?

Sam: I definitely agree that the EP has a dark feel to it. It was a really stripped down, punk rock record. But with the album—a lot of the things it explores, even the way it sounds—it's totally different. As much as the EP is in your face and ballsy, the album has a subtler side to it.

Dan: The album is more of a full work. The EP was just the first six songs we wrote. But getting another member of the band and just exploring music more, made the album totally different.

Sam: And the fact that we only had a week to do the album made it really interesting. We were working out ideas until the last minute. And you can hear it too, it just sounds really spontaneous. It's not canned or over-produced.

Damian: And we were wondering as we were making it, "Is it going to be 12 songs? Is it going to be 9?" We didn't know. But it just represents us as a band. But there's still stuff we want to do.

Because of Damian's work with In My Eyes, The Explosion ended up in some kind of breach of contract with Revelation Records. Could you explain what happened?

Damian: The Explosion was a band that was started so that we, as best friends, could play music together. We just wrote a few songs and then we said, "Let's play some shows," and then it was like, "Let's record a demo." I sent one to Revelation, to Susan Wills, who I was familiar with—I'd seen her at some shows and she had worked with In My Eyes. She said, "Let me know if you guys are ever playing some shows," and that was it. At that time, I wasn't doing The Explosion or In My Eyes full time, I'm a student, and I play in bands on the weekends. The Jade Tree offer came out of the blue. When that started moving, I got a call from Jason Upright at Rev saying, "What's this about Jade Tree, you never sent me a tape, blah, blah, blah." He tried to coax us to Rev, but I said, "Thanks but no thanks," I

mean I'm just one person in a five-piece band, and we're not interested. And they said, "We can't let this happen. You're under contract." In 1997, I was the happiest kid in the world to sign a contract with Revelation Records. I thought, "This is great, this something like a dream." Then they said that either a) we're not gonna let you put your name or face on the record, b) we're gonna take money from your Jade Tree record, c) we're going to sue you and Jade Tree, or d) you have to give us a record.

So they were saying that in your contract, there was some sort of ownership of all your creative output?

Damian: "Exclusive recording," or something like that. I was shocked. I wasn't trying to be sneaky. I go to school, I have obligations to my family and I play in bands on the weekends. I don't see why we had to get lawyers involved. It's just not something I thought would've ever been a part of Revelation or independent music. So, we had to settle on giving them a 5-song EP, and we're going to record that this summer.

Matt: But let me just say that if anyone thinks that's the way to make friends, to make your label look like positive, to look good as a person, it's not. That's not the way to do things; you shouldn't force people to do things. If you're a record label that young kids have been looking up to for years and years, and you've put out records by Youth of Today and Bold, who've promoted a positive image for kids, then you shouldn't do stuff like this.

Dan: But we understand that this is a legal thing, and we don't want to cause Jade Tree any more problems.

Damian: And a part of me realizes that people are going to say, "You shouldn't have signed that contract." And maybe I shouldn't have because I haven't gotten much out of it. I'm not trying to trash anybody, I'm just telling the truth. It drove me crazy. The band was nervous, Jade Tree was nervous, because they couldn't finish the layout, thinking that if my face or name was on it, they'd get sued. And I was trying to deal with mid-terms! I felt terri-

KIDS GO TO SHOWS LIKE THEIR PARENTS GO TO COCKTAIL PARTIES—IT'S STUPID. I MEAN, WHY NOT GO SEE A BAND THAT HAS SOMETHING TO SAY? WHY NOT GO TO A PROTEST? WHY NOT START A 'ZINE?

ble because I was causing all this trouble and stress for everybody. So I just said, "Fuck it, let's just do these five songs, and make it the best for us." Because I didn't want to give them any money, it's not like I've seen any from them.

How has this effected In My Eyes' relationship with Revelation?

Damian: No comment, I guess.

Does anyone else have any comments about the whole situation?

Sam: I think it's sort of interesting because you've got labels dealing with 20-year old kids, and not to say anything about the labels or the kids, but what do you do? Do you get a band to do something by throwing the book at them, or do you just be cool? I think when you're used to friendships and doing things with a handshake and not with a contract and lawyers, which you'd expect from a major label, it's just a hard situation to be in.

Damian: And that's kind of what Rev said to me. They said they were a business and that they had to survive, and how can they let themselves get walked all over? And it made me think, "I'm not walking over anybody, I just want to play in a band with my friends."

So, with all that out of the way, what's it like working with Jade Tree? Some people might be surprised to hear a band like The Explosion on the same label as Jets or Joan of Arc.

Matt: People might think it's weird but we're not doing anything that different from Lifetime or Kid Dynamite.

Dan: They treat every band like they're the only band on the label. It's been great.

Sam: There's so much attention to detail. It's so impressive.

Well the kind of music you guys play, it could just as easily be on Hopeless or GMM as it would Jade Tree. You guys seem to want to branch out, and try different stuff, play to dif-

ferent people. You're going on tour with Cave-In right?

Damian: Well I think that one of the problems right now is that everything is a specific style of music. It's so easy for bands to just play to their little niche. It's so easy for a band to say, "We're an emo band, let's get on Doghouse. Let's play with Piebald every weekend." But we're not about that, not as people and not as a band. When punk rock started, it was about all these different styles of music. Look at CBGB's in the late '70s: you had the Ramones and Patti Smith, and the Talking Heads and the Dead Boys. We just want shake things up.

Dan: We like variety, and we're gonna play with a band if it feels right, whether it's the Promise Ring, Cave In, or whoever.

One thing I noticed about the LP, especially on the song, "No Revolution," with the line, "Who can bring it back and make me believe," is this weird love/hate relationship with punk rock.

Sam: When I wrote that song I knew it was going to be the first song on the album, and I think it has a really triumphant theme. I was just trying to talk about people who are involved with punk not giving a fuck anymore, not wanting to shake things up at all, no one wants to piss people off. Kids go to shows like their parents go to cocktail parties—it's stupid. I mean, why not go see a band that has something to say? Why not go to a protest? Why not start a 'zine? ¶ That's what the song's about: there's no revolution anymore. And that song talks specifically about Boston, about kids being corrupt, being jaded, being fucked up, shitting on their friends, talking shit about their friends, fucking people over left and right. These things happen—it's the world we live in. From the ivory-tower CEO to the kid at the punk rock show, people have that mentality. The song is about finding

something to fight about and sticking to it. Because otherwise, you're not alive.

Damian: And remember where you are and why you're there. Kids are bitter and jaded at 20! Then what is it doing for you? I mean this weekend at a show, kids were sitting on the floor while bands are playing. If that's the way it is for you then go do something else. Go listen to Smashmouth. The theme of the record is that being young and being part of something is really precious. Being in a band gives such a perspective.

Dave: The theme of the record really became that. It followed, "No Revolution," which was the first song we wrote for the record. I think it's a really positive record.

Another theme on the record seems to be believing in the punk rock dream, that you don't always have to do what people tell you to. But more specifically, that you don't have to live the life that's mapped out for you just to get by.

Matt: That's the truth. I mean, we live in a pretty big city where there are lots of schools and lots of history. There's lots to do. And I can't tell you how many college kids I've met and talked to at my job, and I'll be talking about a place that's five blocks from their school and they'll have no idea. It's got nothing to do with music, it's about being aware of your surroundings and the world around you.

Damian: It's about making the most of what your situation is. If you decide you're gonna be somewhere, then immerse yourself in that place.

Dan: That's what we're trying to do with this band. We trying to take full advantage of the opportunities we get and remain good people. So many people take advantage of their place in life, but *why not* remain a decent person? ☺

19 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND ERASE ERRATA

1. When did your band form?

November 1999.

2. When will it break up?

Erase Errata denounces fatalism and does not profess clairvoyance.

3. What have you released so far?

A 4-song cassette; a 7" on Inconvenient Recordings; and a forthcoming CD single with the Need and MeMe America on Toyo Records this October.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

Too many/not enough music lessons.

5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?

When the monkey locked the keys in the car.

6. What is the best show you've ever played?

Local: With E.E., Agent for Allied, Lezbot Rhythmbox, and Ladyfingers & Laura Limes at Kimo's in San Francisco

Out-of-town: With E.E. and the Quails at the Broadway St. House in Santa Cruz.

7. State your purpose.

Experimentation and innovation within "rock" music is still viewed largely as a male domain. This is highly ironic because so many innovators in the early punk/no-wave scenes (from the Slits to the Y-Pants) were women, and there are also plenty of women exploding musical preconceptions and messing with form today. We are conscious of aligning ourselves with that tradition, and wish to make our presence known in that way within both girl-centered and boy-dominated scenes.

8. What were the runner up names for the band?

Blood Sweaters (too scary for Sara), The Britney Queers (libel suit), and a bunch of names that were already taken: The Paper Cuts, Monorail, Monopause, No Doubt.

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?

"Aw, you probably wouldn't like us."

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

Jerk-y, noise-y, dance-y, etc.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

What shows and which songs to play.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

Atarre Esare.

13. What is selling out?

Making musical decisions with the highest financial gain and the highest-profile exposure as the number one driving force behind them.

14. If you could make a living off your band, would you?

If we could keep doing things as we are right now, playing the same kinds of shows, putting out records in the same way, using the same media outlets (i.e. flyering, word-of-mouth, 'zines) to promote ourselves, then yes.

15. Where do you practice?

Oakland, downtown.

16. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?

Lezbot Rhythmbox, E.E., Joy Division, and The Fall, emceed by Dolly Parton.

17. What goals do you have as a band?

Work towards greater cohesion in and support of the Bay Area scene; tour; write lots of new songs.

18. What makes for a good show?

Good bill. Good crowd. Good.

19. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

"Tom Sawyer" by Rush

20 QUESTIONS WITH THE BAND LOVESICK

1. When did your band form?

December, 1997.

2. When will it break up?

May 18, 1980.

3. What have you released so far?

Seven song demo cassette; split 7" with Emergency; split 12" with This Robot Kills; three song 7"; eight song 12". These releases are all self-titled. We have a song on *Quarters Volume One*, a four band split 7" with Quixote, Kleton DMD and Small Brown Bike, as well as various compilation appearances.

4. Why do you play the music that you play?

We have to.

5. What is the weirdest thing that has ever happened at a show?

One of our earlier shows was held at this completely amazing and 10 times as sketchy space called The Dixie. It was basically just a storefront in Ypsilanti with a stage in the back and literally dozens of shady, shadowy characters milling around at all hours because for some reason the business was open 24 hours, although there was rarely any actual business happening. We set up a show there with This Robot Kills where the theme was "Party," and not like burnouts mean when they make reference to "partying," but like a party with charming decorations, cake and ice-cream, that general sort of happy occasion. So imagine a large empty room with two bands set up on the floor just freaking out, and all these kids jumping and rolling around this condemnable building (it was actually condemned a month after the Party show) holding plastic cups full of cake and ice cream as twenty or so questionable business affiliates of the place looked on from different corners of the room. Lovesick gave a short lesson in American Sign Language. This Robot Kills had a spitting fight with the audience.

6. What is the best show you've ever played?

A show with Bloodpact and My Own Pine Box at The Halfway Inn, in Ann Arbor in January of 2000. Everyone there was happy and excited, a total overflowing of energy and joy. There were lots of people there who had surprisingly shown up from far away just for the show and everyone in the audience was crammed in close to the band on the stage, all singing or yelling or just randomly screaming. The snare drum broke in the beginning of a song, and Adam from Bloodpact switched his snare for the demolished one (while we were still playing) just milliseconds before the snare roll that led into the happy and super-energetic part of the song. Everyone freaked out in a triumphant way. The night felt like a hardcore version of a cartoon representation of an '80s movie.

7. State your purpose.

Lovesick is a direct and immediate expression of how we feel, what we're doing with our time, what effects us and what effects those we care about, which at times includes the entire world. We exist as a hope to approximately and honestly articulate these feelings through music, lyrics, discussion and interactions at our live shows. We exist as a forum for communication and sharing of ideas and dreams, that we might help build and support a community of people who want a better and more beautiful life for one another, or at the very least that the people we play for might feel less alone in their confusions, struggles, joy and anger.

8. What were the runner up names for the band?

Heartbreak Beat, Loveseat, No Love Lost, Small Brown Bike, Donkey Trouble.

9. How do you describe yourself to relatives who have no idea what you play?

Something that references "rock music" and "loud" and/or "noisy". Use of the word "Punk" has on more than one occasion elicited responses of "You don't look like punks. Where's your mowhawk?"

10. How do you describe yourself to kids in the scene who haven't heard you?

Think about if Joy Division had put out records on Gravity instead of Factory.

11. What does the band fight about the most?

We don't fight. Neither should you.

12. What is the antithesis of your band?

21+. Records without contact information. "More Rock, Less Talk." Six foot stage. Bands and other losers who still think punk is some sort of boy's club. Everything and anything about Jim O'Rourke. Ebay.

13. Outside of music and bands, what influences you?

Family, friends, love, anger, gnosticism, science fiction, bicycles, two-dimensional art, scooters, cookies, animals, magazines, light, photography, exercise and humor.

14. What is selling out?

Forfeiting your beliefs, ideas and convictions for whatever is safe, comfortable and convenient.

15. If you could make a living off your band, would you?

Yes.

16. Where do you practice?

Wherever we live. Presently in Michael's basement.

17. If you could play on a four-band bill, with any bands that have ever existed, who would you play with and what order would they play?

There would be no assigned order, all four bands would be playing at once. These four bands would be: Joy Division, Prince (Revolution era), Unwound, Team Dresch, The Clash, Ohio, Mini-Systems, New Order, Jaks, Mississippi Fred McDowell, The Fags, The Jam, Andrew WK and Lovesick.

18. What goals do you have as a band?

To discover the truth and reveal it to the youth.

19. What makes for a good show?

The opposite of the answers to question number twelve.

20. If you were to cover a song (that you don't already) what would it be?

"We Want Fun" by Andrew WK.

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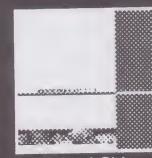
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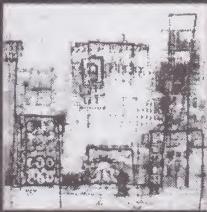
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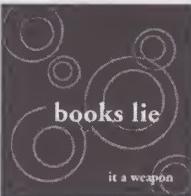
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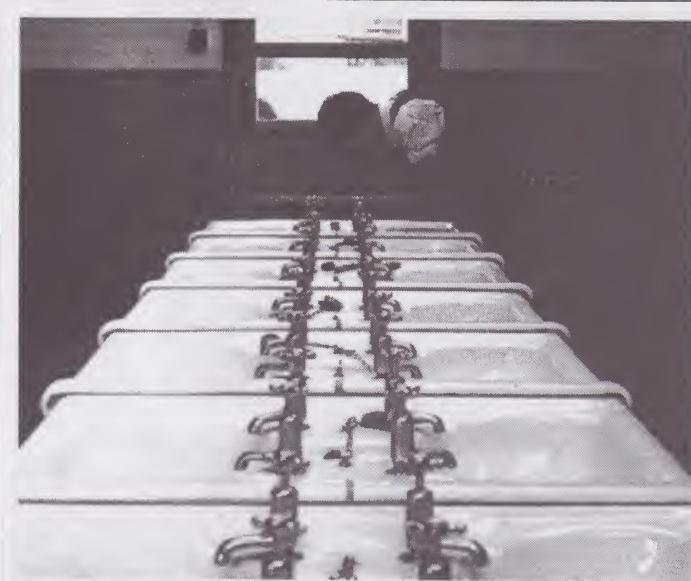
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Ghoti
Hook,
2 Years to Never

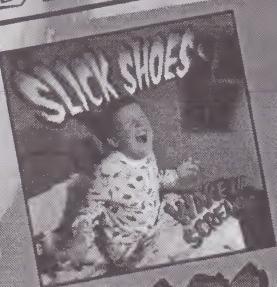
Ghoti Hook is releasing their new album 2 Years to Never, produced with big-time rock axioms by Blink 182 and Green Day engineer Sean O'Dwyer, after first appearing on the scene this spring and summer traveling across the country with MxPx. Over the years, all of the members' influences had progressed and changed, as was reflected original-



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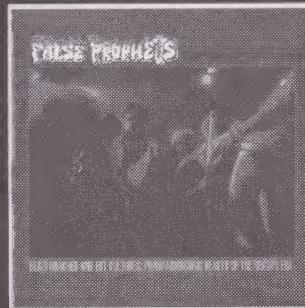


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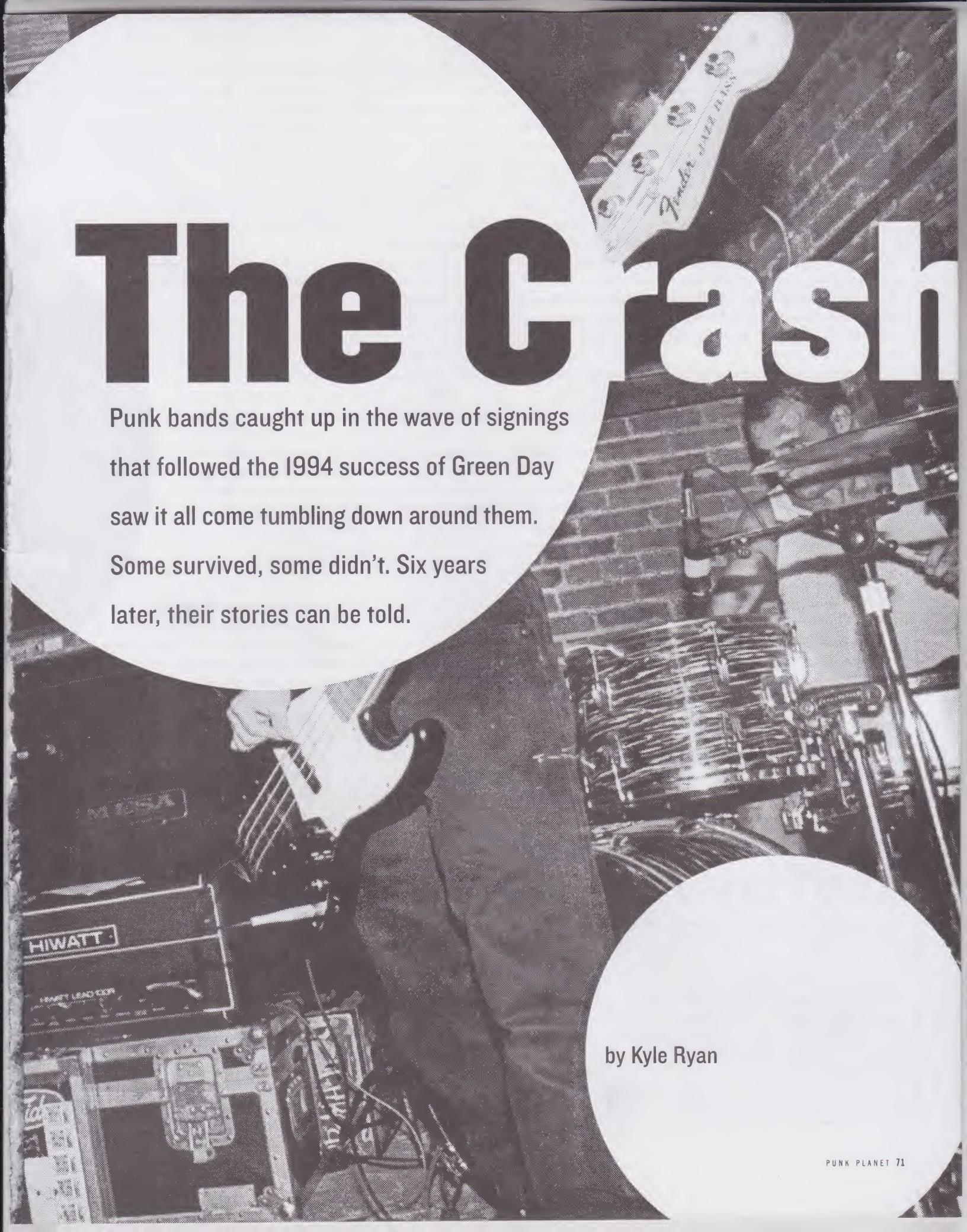
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Jawbox live. Photo by Jim Sanan

The crash



Punk bands caught up in the wave of signings
that followed the 1994 success of Green Day
saw it all come tumbling down around them.

Some survived, some didn't. Six years
later, their stories can be told.

by Kyle Ryan

Every now and then, in the middle of the ocean, an earthquake occurs beneath the sea floor. As oceanic and continental plates collide, the heavier oceanic plate plunges into the earth, moving intermittently. When the oceanic plate sticks against the continental plate, pressure builds up, and the sea floor snaps upward. Instantly, water at the surface jumps to mirror the contours of the seafloor. As the sea flattens back out, ripples of water called tsunamis head out in all directions.

They move at about 500 mph and are almost undetectable in open water. But they gain momentum as they travel and when they near a shoreline, the water rises vertically. When it finally hits ground, the sheer force of the water destroys everything in its path. Normal ocean waves swell, crest and fall, absorbing peacefully into the shoreline. Tsunamis, because of their unwieldy power and size, destroy.

In the early 1990s, the landscape of the punk community buckled with the explosive success of bands such as Nirvana, Green Day and the Offspring. Green Day's success sent shockwaves out in all directions of the music industry, and large tsunamis began to form, gaining momentum and strength as more and more bands signed to major labels.

By 1996, nearly every popular band in punk rock and the independent scene had signed. A series of marketing tsunamis collided with the American mainstream, but for the most part had little impact. The scene that spawned them—the epicenter of this earthquake—felt their greatest effect.

After the tsunamis hit, with few exceptions, all the bands that were swept up in the waves had either parted ways with their labels or had broken up, a seemingly anticlimactic and nearly ignominious end.

However, the stories of these bands are not simple ones. This is the story of one of the most bizarre eras in the independent scene. If you think you know what happened, think again.

Quake

The ground started rumbling in 1991 when Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" broke. Nirvana's abrasive sound desensitized the mainstream and opened doors for punk bands to follow. Their

success didn't lead to the immediate wholesale courting of the punk scene; the Seattle scene that spawned Nirvana felt its greatest impact as labels scrambled to market the "Seattle Sound."

Flannel, diry grunge rock and *Singles* was the result, but the fascination wouldn't last too long. While Nirvana's sound laid the foundation for the punk rock signing boom, the "grunge" that followed had little in common with punk.

That all changed in 1993 when Billie Joe Armstrong, Mike Dirnt and Tre Cool of Green Day signed a contract with Warner Brothers records.

"We kind of came out at a time after Nirvana, and a lot of bands were trying to be like Nirvana and have this grunge credibility or whatever, and it seemed like a lot of people were looking for the next Nirvana," Armstrong says. "It's timing really. You kind of look at what was going on at the time. A lot of people were getting bored with slower, druggy, introverted music that was going on, then we came out."

Green Day was not druggy. Nor were they introverted, though Armstrong's lyrics on *Dookie*, the band's major-label debut, took on a more serious tone than on previous records. Green Day played catchy music and had an entertaining, lively stage presence. The punk community harbored Green Day's greatness for years, but the timing for their introduction to the world could not have been better.

Many other bands in punk history had been on major labels—a pedigree from Husker Du to the Clash to the Sex Pistols and beyond. But those eras lacked two important factors: MTV and the hyper-commercialization of youth culture. In that environment, with the right push (lots of promotion) and a radio hit ("Longview" provided that), Green Day exploded from pop punk's darlings to everyone's darlings.

And they weren't one-hit wonders. 1994 proved pivotal for the threesome, as they scored several radio hits. In the rock niche carved out in the mainstream by Nirvana, Green Day carved another. After all, Kurt Cobain had killed himself earlier that year, and the Seattle scene and grunge were now passé. Green Day had found a new home—a good thing, since their old home had no plans to welcome them back.

The Players

Your roadmap to the who's who and the what's what in this story.

The Bands

The bands featured in this story can essentially be classified into three groups: The Captains of Industry (the huge bands); the Middle Children (bands who weren't as big) and the Young'uns (bands who signed early).

The Captains of Industry

The average reaction to these bands signing was "Those bastards!"

- **Green Day**, through guitarist and vocalist Billie Joe Armstrong.
- **Jawbox**, through bassist Kim Coletta.
- **Jawbreaker**, through bassist Chris Bauermeister.

The Middle Children

Average reaction: "Really? They signed?"

- **Face to Face**, through guitarist and vocalist Trevor Keith.

- **Samiam**, through guitarists Sergio Loobkoff and James Brogen.

- **Sense Field**, through vocalist Jon Bunch.
- **The Smoking Popes**, through drummer Mike Felumlee.

The Young'uns

Reaction: "Who?"

- **Jimmy Eat World**, through drummer Zach Lind.
- **Schlepprock**, through vocalist Doug Caine.
- **Texas is the Reason**, through guitarist Norman Arenas.

Just as mainstream culture had changed since the old days of punk bands on major labels, so too had punk culture. Over the years, it built its own infrastructure: distributors, touring networks, labels. Punk had grown fiercely independent and when one of "its own" left the flock for the corporate-owned record business, punk struck back.

"It was pretty unpleasant to say the least,"

Armstrong says of the punk scene's reaction to their signing. "I knew there was no looking back. Even if we don't sell any records at all, there was still no looking back... I was sort of 86ed so to speak."

Armstrong knew he couldn't return from this high-stakes world when he signed the contract with Warner Brothers.

"I remember signing the document in the Warner building with our old manager," Armstrong says. "I was looking at the document, and right before I signed my name, I

wrote, 'Did any-one actually

read this thing?'

and then I signed

my name. My manager

was just like, 'Sign the fucking paper!' It was such a tense moment because I wrote it just as a joke."

But no one would treat the band's success like a joke, especially among the punknogscentsi, who saw plenty of guilt to go around. With the band

out of reach on Warner Brothers, much of the scene's resentment turned towards their previous label: the independent Lookout Records.

"Maximum RocknRoll, Tim Yohannan in particular, turned against us, and so did a lot of the 'punks,'" Livermore says. "I would attempt to reason with such people by saying, 'What should I have done? Refuse to sell more Green Day records? Make people take a punk credibility test before they were allowed to buy a Green Day (or Operation Ivy or Screeching Weasel) record? Kick bands off Lookout if they grew beyond a certain level?' But such people often weren't amenable to reason.

"My motives in starting Lookout were never to make some kind of statement about what is or isn't 'punk rock.' They were about give the music that I considered worthwhile an opportunity to be heard. Whether a thousand people or 10 million people like the music we put out was never an issue with me."

Lookout, already growing rapidly before Green Day's success, now saw unimaginable amounts of cash flowing through its doors. Growing pains came quickly and severely.

"I'm of the opinion that steady, organic growth is generally better than enormous, unpredictable spurts, because in the latter case, one often loses the opportunity to reflect on where things are going," Livermore says. "In the case of Lookout, we were already growing pretty fast, almost doubling in size every year, but then everything was multiplying by a factor of 10, and with that came a great deal of pressure from all sides—pressure that tended to take a lot of the fun out of running a record label."

Livermore ran the label from his bedroom until 1995—post Green Day explosion—when the label's sales were topping millions of dollars. With that, the homegrown, organic paternalism of running a label clashed into running a business, so Lookout moved into an office building and yielded to the pressure of bands to do more promotion. Simultaneously, Lookout became ostracized from the punk scene.

In a scene that tends to view success with a great deal of suspicion, the label took the brunt of the backlash. Two agendas and habits conflicted at the

The Chorus

To add further context to the proceedings, we have assembled a varied panel of industry insiders, outsiders, critics and cheerleaders.

- **Steve Albini**, former frontman of Big Black, current member of Shellac, respected engineer and icon of the independent scene. Albini wrote "The Problem with Music" for *The Baffler* magazine (it later appeared in *Maximum RocknRoll*), a widely disseminated article and stinging indictment of major-label culture.

- **Mike Gitter**, former A&R representative for Atlantic Records, who signed the likes of

Jawbox and Samiam, currently working for Road Runner Records.

- **Larry Livermore**, founder of Lookout Records, the seminal pop-punk label famous for giving Green Day its start. (Larry is also a columnist for this magazine.)

- **Darren Walters**, cofounder of the successful independent label Jade Tree Records.

- **Mark Ruvolo** of Johann's Face records, from which the Smoking Popes jumped to the majors.

- **Lance Hahn**, guitarist and vocalist for San Francisco band J Church. Major labels also

approached J Church, but they never signed; they watched many of their close friends do it instead.

The Upstarts

Finally, we have up-and-coming bands, the captains of industry right now who have been courted by major labels or have signed.

- **At the Drive-In**, through guitarist Jim Ward.
- **The Get Up Kids**, through guitarist and vocalist Matthew Pryor.
- **The Promise Ring**, through guitarist Jason Gnewikow.
- **Saves the Day**, through drummer Bryan Newman.

heart of the matter: the tendency of the bands to minimize in their minds the effect they have, and the scene's histrionics. What amounts to making ends meet on one side amounts to the most onerous of capitulation on the other.

"I think punks—well, people in general—are always looking for someone or something to blame when things don't go quite the way they'd like," Livermore says.

Blame came fast and furious as a scene shielded from the mainstream suddenly found itself in the spotlight.

"If I had a nickel for every time I've been bagged on," Green Day's Armstrong says, pausing in mid-sentence, "I'd be richer today than I already am." He laughs. "Everything MRR said about me or major labels, they definitely have a point, and their point is totally necessary," he says. "I would never bag on something like that even though my band has taken plenty of pot shots."

Green Day

photo by Nicole Redja

Soon, the scene would have more than one target. As *Dookie*'s success grew, major labels looked at the punk scene as a spindletop from which everyone could make money—a

scene that just months before, none of them even knew existed.

"The funny thing is the scene we came from, it was the biggest kept secret in the world," Armstrong says. "Major labels had no fucking clue how big we were at that point. One time we were playing the Whiskey A Go Go with Rancid, and the labels had no idea, and the place was oversold. Eight hundred people were packed inside the Whiskey, and the label people were like, 'Holy shit! Where did this come from?'"

Finding another band or bands who could replicate Green Day's success became the labels' goal.

"A lot of people got swept up in the idea that their band could get signed or that everyone could have a hit like Nirvana did," says Darren Walters of Jade Tree Records. "The majors smelled money, and in turn, so did the bands, and everyone was jumping ship or attempting to make deals to survive."

The problem was that major labels—because of their bureaucracy and natural inability to sense the avant garde—had only a small clue where to look. They knew punk and independent music were huge, but how would they find it? Thus for some labels and bands, a system like the one used by Major League Baseball came into play.

"The independent music scene was being used for a farm system for the cutting edge of youth market of the mainstream music scene," longtime independent advocate and recording engineer Steve Albini says. "Bands were being formed of their own volition and followed by an audience and then picked up and moved to the mainstream."

Ex-Atlantic A&R man Mike Gitter knows exactly what attracted the majors to the punk scene. "Here are bands that walked in with the complete package," he explains. "They had developed fan bases and knew who their primary audience was. It really in a lot of ways made sense for these bands to sign."

Not every band approached by the majors was wildly popular or huge sellers like Green Day, but a little buzz and the interest of other labels was like ringing a dinner bell and saying, "Come and get it."

"We talked to Atlantic, and in the process we talked to a couple of others because they're like lemmings," Jawbreaker's Kim Coletta says. "If one comes, others will take the cue."

Samiam had a similar experience. "It wasn't like major labels were flocking toward Samiam because we were popular," Loobkoff

says. "If anything it was because Green Day got really popular, so they were interested."

The increasing focus on the punk scene put a lot of bands in the awkward position of having to take sides. Declaring you'd never sign scored points with the scene but would make signing 10 times more damaging. Not swearing your allegiance to the independent scene labeled you a potential sellout, but at least people wouldn't be surprised if you signed. The "sellout debate" was suddenly on center stage.

A videotape of a Jawbreaker show at Emo's in Austin, Texas in 1994 tells it all. After playing "Fine Day," guitarist and vocalist Blake Schwarzenbach approached the microphone.

"We're not on Matador Records," he said. "We're not even on Atlantic or Sony. We're on Communion Records, which is a one-man label from San Francisco."

His statement is met with wild applause. Someone in the audience yelled out "DIY!"

"Well, no, save your adulation because we're in it for the money," Schwarzenbach continued. "[But] if you read we were on a major label, that's bullshit. Although we've been courted by major labels, we're not interested in that."

Somewhere, someone yelled, "Yeah, right!"

Swell

"We want to be a band."

It was a mantra of sorts for the members of Texas is the Reason, something they said when the growing insanity surrounding their band became frustrating.

"That was the party line of the band," Texas is the Reason's Norm Arenas says. "For crissake, we just want to be a band. This is ridiculous.' [But] no matter what we did, things got crazier."

When all of it starts, when the bidding wars or rumors or contracts come your way, band life gets complicated. Just ask the Smoking Popes, who were frantically trying to record new songs for a record their label had postponed because it lacked a "hit." Or ask Jimmy Eat World, whose record label hardly promoted their records because the label still considered the band "developing." Or ask Jawbreaker, who had to eat their words after taking a staunchly anti-major-label stance before signing and face a backlash. Or ask Samiam or Sense Field, whose label dropped them but refused to relinquish their new record even though they had no intention of putting it out. Ask Face to Face what happens when your label goes out of business and your contract forces you to go to a label not interested in your band.

For some people, it even changes how they listen to music. "The weird thing about being in a band is that it's hard for you," says Bryan Newman of Saves the Day. "It kind of ruins your ability to enjoy music on a musical level. [You ask,] 'Is it going to sell on a major label?' Your whole sense of music changes."

For some bands, the vortex of complications and ideals and artistic integrity and contracts and headaches all seems to begin with a definite, palpable feeling of treading water.

The Captains of Industry

"We were a band that toured a lot," Jawbox's Coletta says. "We're playing Cleveland over and over, and the same people were coming to see us. Then we'd get letters like, 'When are you playing in Cleveland?' And we'd just been there! It's frustrating when you put time and energy into something, and on some levels it's not reaching the people that are interested."

The frustration for Coletta and her bandmates mounted. "It was a time in Jawbox that we felt ready for a change," Coletta says. "We didn't specify what kind of change, but we felt we had hit a plateau."

The Plateau. It's a sentiment echoed by many bands interviewed in this article.

For Jawbreaker, the plateau came at the peak of the band's popularity. According to the band's bassist Chris Bauermeister, as early as the *24 Hour Revenge Therapy* tour, when Schwarzenbach made the majority of his anti-major-label statements, the band

had discussed breaking up. They signed to a major instead.

"The decision to sign was an attempt to do something else," Bauermeister says. "Like in any relationship, if things start to look bad, you need to change something. We thought we'd try to sign to a major."

For a band that had so publicly denounced majors, fans viewed their decision as an act of treason.

"Honestly, at that time, we felt we never wanted to be on a major. We felt there was no need," Bauermeister says by way of an explanation. "A lot of the decision had to do with the changes that any band goes through. A band, like an individual, goes through changes in life and develops different perspectives on life. We were in a different position in our careers and lives when we were espousing that sentiment."

But their fans wouldn't let them off the hook that easily. During a tour with Jawbreaker, Mike Felumlee of the Smoking Popes witnessed the fans treatment of their once beloved first hand. "We went on tour with them right after they signed their deal," Felumlee says. "There were probably 700 people a night, and in between songs it was dead silence. Or 'Fuck you!' People paid to insult them."

Steve Albini says the scene did not tolerate Jawbreaker's and Jawbox's newfound senses of self. "Think about it this way," he says. "Those bands represented something of an intellectual or philosophical position. They tried to stretch their definition of that position to include this mainstream behavior in the hopes their audience wouldn't notice. Their audience did notice and punished them for it."

Jawbox had never made a point of espousing any sort of anti-major label sentiment, but that didn't silence the critics.

"I hate to generalize, but the kids who were most upset were 17-year-old boys still living at home with their parents," Kim Coletta says. "I'd never dream of being condescending to people, but the fact is as we do get older, there are lots of reasons that go into that decision. It's not black and white."

A scene quick to point fingers did little to understand the reasoning behind Jawbox's decisions.

"The first big myth of Jawbox is that we had a musical sell-out," Coletta says. "The second big myth is that being on a major broke us up. That's just silly talk."

It's also silly talk to say that Jawbox rode Green Day's coattails to a major label. In actuality, the bands signed at similar times, and their major-label debuts came out around the same time. But where Green Day met success, Jawbox's major label tenure was riddled with miscues, missteps and mistakes. But it all started innocently enough.

Mike Gitter, an old friend of the band's from the Boston hard-core scene, had been consulting for Atlantic Records. After six months, he joined the staff of the company in 1993, taking on Jawbox as his A&R project.

"J. Robbins was an old friend of mine from Government Issue," Gitter explains. "I loved what they were doing. I loved

Novelty [Jawbox's second release on Dischord], and I felt, 'Wow, here's a band the world should know about."

While Jawbox trusted Gitter, the band approached the label with trepidation.

"We thought maybe this is something that could actually work for us," Coletta says. "Obviously you play by their rules to some extent, but we said, 'We're not going to sign unless they agree to more DIY terms.'"

It helped to have Richard Grabel, an entertainment lawyer renowned for getting good contracts for bands, on their side. Through Grabel, Jawbox stipulated they had to approve all ad copy, press kits and anything written about them by the label. They also owned the right to release vinyl versions of the records on DeSoto, the label Coletta and guitarist Bill Barbot ran, and right to release the record in Europe.

Being granted these concessions helped the band make their choice, but their finances helped speed their decision along.

"The fact is there was also the money, and we were broke," Coletta says. "I'm not going to lie and say it's not tempting." They signed a five-record deal in July of 1993 with Atlantic.

In a fiduciary sense, Jawbreaker had done well. With records released on a tiny indie label, they had managed to live the lives of a comfortable independent band. It wasn't caviar and Dom Perignon—more like good cheese and Heineken. But they had to rush recordings, and like many bands, they dreamed of seeing what they could do with time, the most rare of elements on the indie scene's periodic table.

"We wanted to make a major-label record," says bassist Bauermeister. "That was one of the reasons we decided to sign. We wanted to see what we could do with a production budget."

Jawbreaker didn't have an in with an A&R representative like Jawbox had with Gitter. They had something better: Nirvana. When it comes to the cutting edge, most major labels' radar is pretty inefficient, but it's hard not to notice a band that tours with Nirvana. Jawbreaker had done just that, and suddenly a blip appeared on major label's radar centered on the band.

The band spent a week in Los Angeles meeting with the likes of Geffen, Capitol and Warner Brothers, eventually choosing Geffen because it "seemed the most human," according to Bauermeister. They signed a three-record, \$1 million deal in 1994.

In their contracts, Jawbreaker maintained artistic control of the band and set up their own tours. Bauermeister contends staying smart about contracts is the key to avoiding label interference. "There were certain things we had to do, but it was more or less they agreed to back us,"

Bauermeister says. "At that point in terms of where we were, we were doing quite well, so they had no interest in throwing a monkey wrench in that."

Geffen didn't need to toss wrenches; Bauermeister admits to slowly withdrawing from the band,

and the increasing focus on Schwarzenbach shifted Jawbreaker's artistic balance. The first version of the contract with Geffen did not even have Bauermeister's name on it. Eventually, the persona of Jawbreaker would prove to be incompatible with the situation in which they found themselves.

The Jawbox dynamic, at times incongruous with their new major-label digs, had less volatility than similarly-named peers. But while the band was stable, Coletta knew they would never reach the end of their five-record contract. A myth of majors, she says, is that bands are tied to them if they break up or get dropped.

"I didn't really care about how many records it was," she says. "I had no thought that we were going to last for five records, whether on Dischord or Atlantic. Personally, I didn't ever feel like being in my 40s playing rock music on a stage."

Regardless, signing gave Jawbox the chance to live off of music for several years. "That will always be a special time in my life," Coletta says. "Why would anyone really want to work in Kinkos and try to do a band?"

But she concedes that major labels leave something to be desired. "Ideally, yes, I would have liked to been on a indie making enough money and doing music and a label," she says.

While Atlantic gave the band that chance, it also gave Jawbox its first real taste of bureaucracy. Simple processes such as requesting a clear CD tray in the record became monuments to inefficiency. To cut through some of the red tape, the band followed some sage advice to "work the building"—to know everyone there, and make sure they know you.

"Some bands might be intimidated," Coletta says. "We weren't any of those things because we weren't young kids, and we weren't stupid. I think sometimes our sheer enthusiasm surmounted hurdles other bands face at major labels."

Jawbox's "sheer enthusiasm" and dedication to their music led them into the studio to record with the one commodity that had eluded them on an indie: Time. In recording the band's first release for Atlantic, *For Your Own Special Sweetheart*, Vocalist and guitarist J. Robbins did not burn out his voice from rapid recordings like in previous instances, and Coletta for the first time got her bass to sound the way she wanted it. But the cleaner sound of the album branded it a "musical sellout" in loyal fans eyes—despite the fact that Jawbox had written the songs before they signed, and the label had no role in the creative process.

Although Jawbox's major-label debut had a slicker sound than its predecessors, listening to *Dear You*, Jawbreaker's major-label debut, was much more shocking for most of their fans.

Many of the band's fans, already jaded with the news of the band's signing, found further ammunition when they heard *Dear You*. Schwarzenbach's vocals were clear and melodic, the raspy yelling of preceding records kept to a minimum. But, like Jawbox, the cleaner production wasn't a result of major label meddling.

"A lot of the way the record came out was all a conscious decision on our part," Bauermeister says.

Schwarzenbach had never been satisfied with his vocals on previous records, and spent weeks perfecting the vocal tracks for *Dear You*. But in addition to changing the band's signature sound, the loud, clear vocals seemed to signify a change in the backstage dynamic of the band as well.

"The move towards it being much

more Blake's band can be seen very easily in that Adam and I finished our tracks in about a week," Bauermeister says. "Blake was in there for five weeks."

On an independent label, Schwarzenbach had cult-figure status, but with a major label, which specializes highlighting the frontman, Bauermeister says Jawbreaker slowly became Schwarzenbach's band.

The press packet for Jawbreaker emphasized Schwarzenbach's songwriting and lyrics, and the video for "Fireman" showed him more than anyone else. But Bauermeister says that Schwarzenbach had little control over it.

"It's the nature of the way pop culture consumes music," he says. "There's always a front guy; they're highlighted and concentrated upon."

The shift in focus from ensemble to frontman and back-up band only seemed to deepen the fissures in Jawbreaker.

For Jawbox, always more of an ensemble than Jawbreaker ever was, their lack of a frontman was another complication in their label's marketing strategy. Even though Atlantic liked the record, the label had little idea how to promote the band.

"Major labels are not good at marketing smaller bands," Coletta says. "They're marketing machines geared toward much bigger bands. Regional reps don't have a clue about the independent music scene. I think the press and college radio were excellent, but the rest of it was crap."

Thus came the awkward moments for the band—interviews with new, unfamiliar media outlets and surreal situations. In one of the more bizarre turns, the band ended up in a fashion spread for *Details* magazine.

"It was a men's fashion magazine, so I got to wear whatever the fuck I wanted," Coletta says. "But those guys looked ridiculous. They had the most ridiculous clothes on. We did this scene in a supermarket that you have to see the photo to believe it. I won't say we regretted it because that would be going too far, but it was kind of like, 'What the hell did we do that for?'"

Some would ask the same thing when the band toured with grunge band-of-the-minute Stone Temple Pilots. The pairing of a low-selling band with a high-selling band for a stadium tour in an attempt to get the band more exposure is a typical move for major labels—but it was one the band initially resisted.

"Our first thought was, 'No way,'" Coletta says. "Our music is way too challenging for the average listener. We're never going to have a hit song. Who are we kidding? But wouldn't it be fun to tell the grandkids that you played Red Rock in Colorado?"

The band took the gig.

Did these marketing moves sell a lot more records? No. Although *Sweetheart* did well by independent-label standards by selling about 60,000 copies, the sales fell below Atlantic's expectations. All parties agreed the band needed more help from the label, so Jawbox moved to a newly formed subsidiary of Atlantic called TAG (short for The Atlantic Group). With fewer bands to promote, the label would theoretically give the band more attention.



"We weren't good at selling ourselves," says Jawbreaker's Chris Bauermeister. **"We weren't good at providing the package deal on stage and playing the radio hit. I think in the long run, it hurt us in the major market. We weren't cartoon characters who could play a song over and over again and act wacky on stage."**

For Jawbreaker, attention wasn't the problem. Bauermeister feels Jawbreaker had a few habits that didn't bode well for selling a lot of records.

"We were fan-oriented to a certain degree," he says, "but we were much more interested in writing music. When we did the *Dear You* tour, we never played the damn 7 inch ["Fireman"]. It sort of doomed us in major-label play because we weren't user friendly. We didn't do the marketing angle right. We weren't good at selling ourselves. We weren't good at providing the package deal on stage and playing the radio hit. I think in the long run, it hurt

us in the major market. We weren't cartoon characters who could play a song over and over again and act wacky on stage."

Of course, playing "the damn 7 inch" had its own problems. Before labels release records, they plan a sequence of tracks for singles. Geffen's plan for *Dear You* began with "Fireman," moved to "Save Your Generation" and continued with "Accident Prone." Yet when "Fireman" failed to catch on (even with the support of a video), the label panicked and jumped ahead to "Accident Prone" as the second release, deciding to go with the "quirkier" song. It was a poor decision: due to

Atlantic, simply titled *Jawbox*. Recorded in early 1996 and produced by John Agnello, it would be the band's last record. It was also their favorite.

"We had the most fun recording that record out of all of them," Coletta says. "We were just comfortable in our own skin."

The band was comfortable with themselves, but uncomfortable with their label. Four months after *Jawbox* completed the record, TAG folded. *Jawbox* moved back to Atlantic, which dropped them a few months later.

Although Coletta had no premonitions that *Jawbox* would be the band's swan song, she says sometime after its release, the band began to feel that they had reached the end.

"We felt like we had a great run, and we didn't want to be a band that lingered too long," Coletta says. "We didn't want to see *Jawbox* disintegrate into something less than interesting."

According to Coletta, the band requested to be dropped. Breaking up before being dropped could keep them contractually obligated to Atlantic for future musical projects; but if Atlantic dropped them, all ties would be severed. The label complied.

While some bitterness regarding Atlantic lingered in the band, they have since mellowed.

"Sometimes people come from a journalistic place where they want horror stories—I'm not able to provide them," Coletta says. "If you think of bad things as learning experiences, it puts a much

more positive spin on things," she continues. "In terms of the *Jawbox* situation, we could have tweaked a few things, but I wouldn't have done things differently. Labels are just vehicles in the end."

"If you think of bad things as learning experiences, it puts a much more positive spin on things," Kim Coletta says. "In terms of the *Jawbox* situation, we could have tweaked a few things, but I wouldn't have done things differently. Labels are just vehicles in the end."

photo by John Falls

the song's length and hefty instrumental section, it necessitated a radio edit. The band wasn't happy.

Art and marketing once again clashed and the end result was increased stress among the three members, especially Bauermeister. He became increasingly hostile and closed off to the business and marketing side of the band.

"There were some people connected to the label who were really cool and really nice people, but I think they got sort of clouded in my vision of hostility," Bauermeister admits. He became more withdrawn on tour as well. "You're trapped in a van with the same guys. There were tensions in personal relationships and the fact that I felt like I was more and more of a fifth wheel in the band."

Yet even with Bauermeister's mounting hostility, the band still made compromises. In Boston, the band played an invitation-only "coming out" show for a hiphop/reggae band. Jawbreaker played to apathetic industry types while their fans waited outside.

"Things like that were frustrating," Bauermeister says of the show. "We got paid really well, but things like that make me resentful of major record labels and the whole industry. You're a marketable commodity, and regardless of the degree of integrity you have, there are things you have to do because you have to be marketable."

A more marketable sound, according to naysayers, characterized the slicker production of *Jawbox*'s second record for

Jawbreaker had a shorter ride on their vehicle. Tours with bigger bands such as the Foo Fighters resulted in more exposure, but little else.

"Geffen made us less money touring than we did," Bauermeister says. "The way we toured changed drastically. When we did our town tours and the first leg of the first [*Dear You*] tour, we did the same sorts of things we had done all along. We were headlining, making a healthy living as an independent band. [But] as a marketing aspect, you have to go out on tours with bands who have already hit, and most of them have contracts and riders that get most of the money."

During their brief stint with Nirvana, one club refused to allow the band to sell t-shirts. They had to sell them on the street before being run off by promoters. "You're dealing with this whole network of people who are businessmen who have nothing to do with music," Bauermeister says. "They're leeches. There's a whole spectrum of leeches who make money off of other people's music."

Jawbreaker played what would be their last show in May of 1996 in Seattle.

"They were going to drop us, but we broke up," Bauermeister says. "We sold 20,000 copies of *Dear You*, the same we had sold for *24 Hour*.

It was great for us, but for Geffen it was nothing.

What's successful for you as an independent band is failure on the major-label scene."

Bauermeister and Schwarzenbach had fought—literally—by the end of the tour, and the need to do something different became stronger. The members of Jawbreaker returned from tour but did not see one another for two weeks. The mechanisms propelling the band to break up before they signed to Geffen came back, and this time they won. Although Bauermeister says the breakup was mostly personal, he explains their disappointment with Geffen played a role.

"Our intention with a major label was to try to move it up to a new level and to do something different with the band," Bauermeister says. "After a year of trying to market ourselves, we were still in the same place we were before. It looked as though nothing had changed. We would have to tour even more."

None of them wanted that. "There's something to be said for it because arrested adolescence is fun for a while, but I felt sort of like my brain was atrophying," Bauermeister says.

He countered that by enrolling in graduate school at Purdue University. He didn't play music again until 1999, when he joined Horace Pinker.

"I was having an allergic reaction to music," Bauermeister says. "Some shows are fun, but most of the time, you're not doing the fun show part. You're doing all this other crap, and the other crap became even more horrifying with major labels. It added a whole other dimension of things for me to detest about it."

For the labels involved, they simply cut their losses and moved on to find the next "next big thing."

"For better or worse, it's the normal state of affairs," A&R rep Gitter explains. "Bands are signed. Some succeed, some make it to a second record, some don't succeed whatsoever—and ultimately it's up to the public to determine that."

Sometimes, though, the public never gets much of a chance.

The Middle Children

If anything characterizes the middle tier of bands who signed in the mid-'90s, it's no chance. For labels unable to market bands like Jawbox and Jawbreaker—established bands with healthy national followings—what chance did smaller bands have?

With the luxury of hindsight, it's an easy question to answer. But this was 1994, and the failure of Jawbox and Jawbreaker hadn't played out to the end

and meanwhile, Green Day was continuing to burn up the charts. With Green Day going gold, major labels would continue their quest to crack the charts again.

But, as Green Day's Armstrong knew, timing was everything and bad timing plagued the middle children. Some signed too early or even too late, and had records been released at the right time to build momentum, the stories of these bands could have had very different endings.

Face to Face experienced it all. The band debuted with 1992's *Don't Turn Away* on Dr. Strange Records. After a nasty fallout with the label, Dr. Strange sold the album's rights to Fat Wreck Chords—which in 1994 hardly resembled the indie powerhouse it is today. While nowadays it would almost seem suicidal for a band on Fat to sign to a major, Face to Face did exactly that in 1994 with Victory Music (not to be confused with the independent hard-core label).

"At the time, Fat was a brand-new label, and the advance offered to us by them was about one-tenth of the advance at Victory," singer Trevor Keith says. "I think *Don't Turn Away* was their third release. The money wasn't there yet to offer a competitive advance, and we thought going to a label affiliated with A&M/Polygram was the big time."

It wasn't. Although a small subsidiary label, Victory Music gave the band a large monetary advance and Polygram distribution, and backing of a label president that fully believed Face to Face would be huge.

"The president of Victory Music was a man named Phil Carson," Keith says. "Phil Carson was this industry guy who had been around for 100 years. He used to tour manage Led Zeppelin, and he worked with AC/DC in the early years, and that's all he ever talked about," says Keith. "When we first signed to Victory Music, we played a showcase at the Whiskey in LA for all of the staff of Victory Music, A&M Records and Polygram. The show went really well, and afterwards, standing outside, Phil Carson, bursting with pride after seeing his new, young punk band blow away the suits for the first time, leaned over and said, 'You guys are going to make it. You're going to get me my helicopter back.'"

Talk about pressure. But the band felt that the bosses blessing further reinforced their decision to leave Fat. But then the unexpected happened: Another punk band got huge. But this band, the Offspring, were on an indie.

"Here we go to a mid-level major, and Epitaph has a huge hit with the Offspring. That event changed the entire landscape for indie punk labels in the '90s," says Keith.

Shortly after the Offspring's success came the suc-

cess of labelmate Rancid and the explosive growth of Epitaph-distributed Fat Wreck Chords—Face to Face's former label. This christened the band's dance with bad timing. But they weren't alone. Samiam, the Smoking Popes, and Sense Field were all on the dance floor as well.

Samiam also moved to a major before the boom of the Offspring. They had cultivated a mid-sized national following, but their label's small size kept their records from reaching as many people as they would have liked. When a big label called and offered more time to record and better distribution, the band listened.

"We're a bunch of guys making music, hoping people out there will like it," guitarist Sergie Loobkoff says. "We've always been more like beggars than choosers anyway. For me, it was more of an opportunity to do something that was different and more exciting. The guys in Samiam didn't have stars in their eyes. We were pretty thankful to make a record that we thought sounded pretty good."

Their three independent records hadn't been the best experiences for the band, and Samiam felt they had little fear from major-label larceny.

"We dealt with such assholes with indie labels," Loobkoff says. "We weren't really all that afraid of getting ripped off by a major label. We're still dealing with a lot of fucking shithead people in the punk-rock scene who have a lot of clout and actually aren't the nicest people."

Working with Mike Gitter, the same person who signed Jawbox, Samiam signed a two-record deal (with the option of seven) with Atlantic at the end of 1993. But while they may not have been afraid of being ripped off by the label, the process still intimidated them.

"When we first signed to Atlantic, I didn't know what we could actually ask and didn't want to blow it," Loobkoff says. "I didn't want to have to go back to NRA because we blew it because we asked for a box of Cuban cigars."

Samiam, though an established punk band, lacked the power of an independent radio hit going into contract negotiations—only the Smoking Popes had that. While on Chicago's Johann's Face Records, the song "Need You Around" from 1994's *Born to Quit* hit

No. 1 at the hugely influential local radio station Q101, which then spread to the even more influential KROQ in Los Angeles. For the archaic radar of major labels, that was the equivalent of a Stealth Bomber sneaking in and dropping a nuclear warhead. The surge came early for the Popes, and Capitol records, the label they eventually signed to, unsuccessfully played catch up for the rest of the band's existence.

The band negotiated its contract, which exceeded 100 pages in length, for five months. Basically, Capitol "amply" compensated Johann's Face (according to label owner Mark Ruvolo) for the

record while he retained the rights to *The Smoking Popes Get Fired*, the band's first LP. Yet, while the band and label hammered out the details, the buzz surrounding "Need You Around" climaxed. Once their three-record deal had finally been signed in August of 1995, Capitol issued the rerelease of *Get Fired* months after the "Need You Around"'s popularity peaked, still trying to get the most mileage out of the single.

"I was hoping that they would do a new single as soon as the record came out," says Mike Femlee. "I think that was a mistake on their behalf by trying to milk 'Need You Around' for all its worth."

And at that point, it wasn't worth much. The label finally released a second single, "Rubella," about four months later, long after interest in the band had dwindled. The Popes became disillusioned quickly.

So did Face to Face. Victory Music went out of business not long after the band released their second full-length, *Big Choice*, in February of 1995. Carson never did get his helicopter and the band moved to A&M Records in 1996 and released a self-titled record.

"Under the terms of our contract with [Victory Music], we were to be assigned to a Polygram label," Keith says. "Wow, what luck that A&M wanted us! So we ended up there by no choice of our own."

In 1997, Keith and the band's manager met the president of A&M Records at the time, Al Cafaro. Keith expressed his concerns that the label didn't understand how to market and distribute the band and wanted out of the deal. The label declined but offered more money, and because they were still under contract, Face to Face accepted.

Around the same time, the band released a live record through Vagrant Records under the band's own imprint, Lady Luck. "We figured if they wouldn't let us leave, we might as well get the money and hopefully use it to pay Vagrant to fill in the cracks," Keith says.

Samiam had similar complaints about publicity. Although the label liked *Clumsy*, the record did not receive the right push. Ad campaigns were inefficient and poorly placed, and worse still, the records didn't make it to the stores.

"A label like Fat [Wreck Chords] or Epitaph or Jade Tree, if they can anything do well, they can target people who like to hear the band," Loobkoff says. "Atlantic and Ignition [the label that released the band's follow-up record] really didn't know how to do that. They had a lot of money, but they didn't have any know-how whatsoever."

Even when Samiam garnered radio attention during their second major-label record, *You are Freaking Me Out*, the label failed to provide adequate distribution.

"Every big rock station in the city we were at was playing us, but it didn't work out because the records weren't in the stores. I would think that being on a major label that once you got on the radio, they'd definitely treat it with the importance of Stone Temple Pilots doing well on radio. There's no way to make anyone buy a record, but I think they would put that in the stores so if they wanted to buy it they could."

Face to Face's Keith faced similar frustration. "I was warned and well aware of all the traps and snares that lie ahead," he says. "But like a lot of other new, young artists, I figured that reading the Donald Passman book *Everything You Need to Know about the Music Industry* would arm me with all the wits I needed to overcome the adversity. What a bunch of crap. All A&M wanted from us was radio. We had a little, and that was all they focused on. When that went away, so did the support."

It was a problem endemic to major labels with this new crop of bands. "There was no feel for how to sell records for a punk band," Keith says. "The entire marketing plan is based on radio. No radio? It's over. Go make another record."

A&R rep Gitter contends this sort of strategy hardly amounts to callousness on the part of record labels. "When a record isn't working, a label says go onto the next record," he says. "Was it the fault with the label, the band or the public that didn't buy it? That's a sad admission for a lot of people, the realization that, 'Wait a second, what I as an artist do, while being incredibly valid to me, may not be what satiates the public.'"

The need for radio kept the Smoking Popes' second record in limbo as well. Although *Born to Quit* had sold around 70,000 copies, the sales fell below the label's expectations. The pressure to compensate for all that *Born to Quit* lacked pervaded the writ-

When the Smoking Popes met with Capitol label head Gary Gersh, "he kind of gave us this spiel about how he wanted us to develop into a band like the Pixies or REM slowly," says Mike Felumlee. "Whether that's what he wanted or not, that's not what whoever controls the records thinks. They want you to sell a million right off the bat."

ing of its successor, *Destination Failure*. The mounting pressure seemed to contradict the plans Gersh had for the band when they signed.

"When we met with [label head Gary Gersh], he kind of gave us this spiel about how he wanted us to develop into a band like the Pixies or REM slowly," the Popes' Felumlee says. "Whether that's what he wanted or not, that's not what whoever controls the records thinks. They want you to sell a million right off the bat."

Sense Field's *Building* didn't sell a million right off the bat, either. In fact, singer John Bunch doesn't know how many copies it sold, as it was released simultaneously on two labels. The band had been shopping around

for a deal just before their label, the long-time independent Revelation released their third full-length, *Building*. As the band met with majors, they asked if the labels would be interested in helping distribute *Building*.

"Not to diss on Rev, but one thing we would come across was people would say they couldn't find our albums anywhere," Bunch says. "That was the real difficult part. We'd be on tour for the new album, and people would be like, 'I didn't know you had a new record out.'"

Warner Brothers expressed willingness to help distribute *Building*, so the band signed a six-record (two firm) deal with the label in 1996.

Because of their late arrival to the major-label arena, Sense Field had plenty of opportunities to watch peers and friends move on to big labels—and chances to ask questions.

"It was this huge mystique," Bunch says. "'What's going on? What's it like? Is it as scary as everybody says?' It's this whole other world you've never been to, and it's supposed to be this big, scary thing, then it starts happening to you."

Bunch says Sense Field chose Warner because it seemed the most stable and most willing to let bands grow—two traits that



photo by Brad Miller

would reverse themselves in the following years. A bad omen came early for the band.

"One time, the label had this huge staff meeting and was doing their presentation to the band and to our manager at the time, and were talking about how they wanted to put out our music," Bunch says. "And the vice president fell asleep and was out during the meeting."

A drowsy VP is a good metaphor for Warner Brothers' desul-

tory promotion of the record. Even Sense Field's bio page on the Warner website just linked to the Revelation homepage.

The label's large roster probably didn't help the situation. Depending on the number of bands on a label, your band could experience a trickle-down sort of publicity. Big bands get the most, and it decreases as you move further down the totem pole. Combine this with overextended label representatives, and mediocre sales seem certain.

"On a major label, they either work you or they don't," says James Brogan, guitarist of Samiam. Brogan recalls walking into the radio promotions director's office and seeing to huge stacks of CDs on his desk, two phones to his ears and looking frantic. "He didn't have time to work on any one record in particular," Brogan says. "We knew right there we were doomed."

The Smoking Popes felt the same sense of doom shortly after Capitol rereleased *Born to Quit*, a feeling exacerbated by the pressure they felt going into record *Destination Failure*. No one felt the pressure greater than Josh Caterer, the band's vocalist, guitarist and primary songwriter, who at this time was enduring marital and spiritual problems in addition to having the responsibility of writing "a hit."

The Popes had never experienced recording like they did with the *Destination Failure* sessions. Capitol insisted the band

ence project. Everything has to be so perfect. We would get like two drum tracks done in a day. I'd play a song, I'd think it was perfect, and Jerry would say it didn't feel right."

It was a frustrating, tedious style of recording, but one designed for a slick, major-label sound, which Capitol expected from the band. As the recording neared completion, the band sent demos to the record company.

"We did about 90 percent of the record and turned it in, and Capitol told us there was no hit song on the record," Felumlee says.

The band went back to the drawing board. Out of the desperation came "I Know You Love Me," the song that would not only be the record's hit but would also be the harbinger of the end of the Smoking Popes. While the song allowed them to complete *Destination Failure*, Caterer's relationship with God inspired it—a relationship that would eventually end the band.

The experiences of formerly independent bands on major labels seem formulaic at times: Band gets big. Band gets signed. Major label doesn't understand band. Record sales do well by indie standards but not by major standards. Band tries again. Band gets dropped. Band breaks up.

The Smoking Popes almost fit into that formula, they just had one extra step. After "Band gets dropped," add "Singer finds Jesus." Caterer became a born-again Christian after the release of *Destination Failure*.

If Face to Face had been praying to get released from their contract, their prayers were answered. Shortly after the success of their live record, the Polygram merger followed, and with Cafaro no longer in charge, the band got out of their contract.

For the first time, the band experienced luck. In 1998, the band signed a nontraditional contract with Beyond Music.

"The deal isn't with the band but with our imprint, Lady Luck Records," Keith says. "This means we decide on how every dollar is spent on manufacturing, marketing and distribution. There is no advance that has to be recouped but a recording fund. All money is split in a net deal. This doesn't pay us a royalty in traditional terms, but half of the net profit."

In addition to the other stipulations in their contract, the band also receives major-label distribution through BMG.

Not a bad deal, especially considering the band is lucky Face to Face still exists.

They released *Ignorance is Bliss* on Lady Luck/Beyond

in 1999 and *Reactionary* on Lady Luck/Vagrant earlier this year.

"My myth was that I thought I could take them on alone," Keith says. "If going to a major is an option for any band, I really believe

Face to Face

use an experienced producer to record the album, bringing in Jerry Finn (who had mixed Green Day's *Dookie* and produced Rancid's *And Out Come the Wolves*) to produce. The Popes reluctantly agreed, a hesitation based in no small part on their own worry they wouldn't measure up to Finn's standards.

"Recording that record was the most interesting experience I've ever had in music," Felumlee says. "It was almost like a sci-

"I don't think these things happen only at majors," he says. "Indies have their share of problems as well. I think it's important for bands to know exactly what they want from a label and go to the one who can come the closest to giving it to them."

they need a team of experienced people who can help them sort through the bullshit."

Keith is quick to point out that many of the pitfalls Face to Face experienced aren't exclusive to the majors. "I don't think these things happen only at majors," he says. "Indies have their share of problems as well. I think it's important for bands to know exactly what they want from a label and go to the one who can come the closest to giving it to them."

The key to survival, Keith says—and the reason Face to Face still exists—is devotion.

"It is so hard to keep a band together for a long period of time," Keith says. "All of the people in the band have to love it. Business has a way of pulling people apart in bands, not necessarily record labels, but that can be a part of it. In Face to Face, we love what we do; that's why we're still here, label or not."

Samiam loves what they do, too—but that love wouldn't directly help get their record released. When they first signed, Loobkoff thought their contract seemed extremely band friendly. Theoretically, Atlantic had to release *You are Freaking Me Out* by a certain date or the band would have the right to take it to another label. That wasn't how it worked out. After receiving the album, Atlantic dropped Samiam in 1996.

"Every time I signed a contract, I got confused real quick with wording," Loobkoff says. "As it transpired, they didn't have to put out a second record."

Atlantic refused to release *You are Freaking Me Out*. Nor would they give it to another label without being compensated for the cost of recording. Samiam played the waiting game and experienced the greatest danger of becoming a casualty of major-label shenanigans.

"That was a really hard time emotionally," Loobkoff says. "It was draining."

Eventually, Atlantic sold the record to European label Burning Heart. *You are Freaking Me Out* made it to the States in 1998 on Ignition, part of the Tommy Boy family.

"Basically what it was at the end, our lawyers and us would call Atlantic so much, they finally just figured, 'Let's give them the record and make them shut up,'" Loobkoff says. "They definitely weren't being dicks because they hated us, they just didn't want to have to do it. It was a lot of work."

A label can either pay their lawyers ridiculous amounts of money per hour to draw up the papers to sell the record, Loobkoff explains, or they can use their resources to work on a band or artist that has a chance of making the label money.

If any band can empathize with Samiam's plight, Sense Field can. Warner Brothers did the same thing to their second major-label record, *Sense Field*. The stability Sense Field had admired in Warner Brothers seemed to disappear by the completion of the album. The label's agenda of letting bands develop disappeared as well.

Organizational problems sent the record over time and over budget, and a new influx of people at the label meant that no one knew the band enough to be willing to take a chance on them. In the seven years Green Day has been a part of Warner, Armstrong estimates the staff has endured a complete turnover three times.

"Green Day's in a good position because they've sold millions of records," Bunch says, "but when you're trying to start your career at that level, people want to bring in their own bands, and they want to be responsible for successes they can claim to be their own. To let people know who we were, we kept reintroducing ourselves to new people," Bunch says. "It got to the point where we didn't know anybody at the label, and most of the new people we did know were gone."

When a label itself suffers financially, the powers that be bring in new blood to clean house, which can spell disaster for a band.

"Say they bring in a new guy who's getting a shitload of money to turn a label around because it's not doing well," Bunch says. "He's not getting paid to sit on his ass."

Not sitting on his ass entailed getting rid of Sense Field. At press time, Warner Brothers had still not released the rights to *Sense Field*.

Bunch minimizes the consequences of being dropped. "We were a band before we were on Warner Brothers," he says. "A label doesn't make a band; music makes the band."

Labels can definitely aid in the unmaking of a band, though. As if the recording process for *Destination Failure* needed more problems, the Smoking Popes received a particularly damaging phone call. Their A&R representative, Matt Aberle, had been fired.

"Once your guy gets fired, you're done," the Popes' Felumlee says. "Then it gets passed over to someone else who doesn't care about you. If you're not huge, they don't want to put any energy into it. They don't want to risk their job over you."

Before the band could finish reeling from the news of Aberle's departure, Gersh announced a freeze on the record. The release of *Destination Failure* would be postponed indefinitely. The Popes pleaded with Capitol to release the record, even agreeing to have minimal support for it. Capitol reluctantly agreed.

"I think it totally killed any hope of that record doing well," Felumlee says. "They didn't even put out a single to commercial radio for that record. They did a little bit for college radio. No video, no radio. They might have even scrapped tour support for that one. That was when we realized they weren't going to do anything for this record and probably wouldn't for any other record."

The title, *Destination Failure*, drips with so much irony that pointing it out merely states the obvious. Capitol released the record in August of 1997, and that October, the band spent five weeks touring with Morrissey, an exciting but laborious prospect for the Popes. The tour could have saved *Destination Failure*, considering the band did well on the tour, receiving a good response from crowds. Capitol could have seized the opportunity. It didn't. Without promotion, *Destination Failure* reached its destination.

Samiam felt like they were on the same flight. Not only did the holding pattern Atlantic put them in strip the band down to its original members (Loobkoff, Brogan and vocalist Jason Beebout), Ignition went out of business after releasing *You are Freaking Me Out*. Samiam once again called their lawyers, this time to get out of their contract with a label that didn't exist anymore. Earlier this year, the band signed to independent label Hopeless Records. Samiam's new record, *Astray*, came out on Hopeless in August.

"I'm sure a lot of people were surprised that we came out with another record after *Clumsy*," Loobkoff says. "'They've been battered around so much, I thought they would have broken up years ago.' I can totally understand that attitude. People have that perception when you know a band is on a major label, they think that's what they do with their lives. Even if you're in a popular band, that's kind of sad. It's not a healthy way to spend your entire adult life."

Loobkoff reiterates that Samiam comprises part of his life, not all of it. This sort of separation could account for why Samiam still exists. "This is really important to me to be in this band, but I'm a human being first," he says. "Then I'm a guitar player in a band."

"We want to do this, and there were so many obstacles in our way to bring tears to your eyes," Samiam's other guitarist James Brogan says. "We just kind of hung tough, and we were having a lot of fun, and that was the main thing. That's why I think we're still together."

The Smoking Popes, however, are not. The mental images the band had of what being on a major label meant only made reality disappointing.

"We were all pretty young at the time," Felumlee says. "We thought signing meant you go on tour, and there'd be people there. We realized touring still sucked. There weren't any signs that it was going to get any better, and we'd been doing it for a long time and were starting to get on each other's nerves."

Still contractually obligated for one more record, but suffering from the increased alienation of their primary songwriter, the Popes faced an uncertain future. Caterer, who had been born again in May of 1998, could no longer write the songs people expected from the Popes and stay true to his spirituality. He suggested doing an album of covers.

"I really wanted to do one more original record, but it wasn't in the plan," Felumlee says. "I think that one [Josh] just did for the rest of us so we could get our last check from Capitol. When he first came up with the idea to do that record, I knew he wasn't going to write anymore Popes love songs."

Capitol rejected the record, ironically titled *The Party's Over*, and eventually dropped the band. Unlike most bands, the Popes received a more than generous settlement from the label: the rights to record and compensation for it. The money bought some time for the Popes to contemplate their future.

"We were starting to figure out we probably weren't going to be a band for much longer," Felumlee says.

The band probably could have moved to a large indie, but Caterer had written his last secular song. Although the rest of the Popes accepted it, they did so grudgingly. Felumlee, married with a child, worried about making ends meet. In the meantime, he started a label called Double Zero Records, which released a Popes anthology and a Popes live record this year.

With the passing of a couple years to buffer the sting, Felumlee feels neither bitterness nor anger. His current band, the Alkaline Trio, is experiencing rising popularity and recently signed to Vagrant. When he thinks of the Smoking Popes' experiences, he sees problems on all sides.

"I thought [Capitol] could have done a lot better, but I think we could have done a lot better," he says. "After a while, I think we kind of fell apart with Josh and everything. If the climate was right, I'd consider doing it again."

In hindsight, Felumlee wonders how things would have differed had they developed on an independent label for a longer period of time. "I don't think we did anything right," he says.

The Young'uns

There's only a subtle difference between not doing anything right and doing everything wrong, but it's this difference that encapsulates the last tier of bands to have gotten caught up in the major label tides. For bands like Jimmy Eat World, Schleprock and Texas is the Reason, hindsight shows that their fate was sealed the moment they stepped in the water.

But again, hindsight makes decisions simple. Real life poses different choices. In 1994, Schleprock found themselves with a choice that seemed pretty easy: signing to a major label and the possibility of living off your band, or burying dead bodies.

Prior to signing, one of the band's guitarists buried bodies in a cemetery to make ends meet.

Another member was a delivery boy (at age 29).

Another one lived in his grandmother's garage.

Another one, living at home with his mom and girlfriend, worked construction.

Such lifestyles hardly made independent life seem attractive. "Some people might get offended at me for saying that we were like, 'Hey man, I'm tired of working this shitty job,'" says Doug Caine, Schleprock's vocalist. "I was tired, dude. I want to play my music; that's what I love doing. These might be weak excuses to some people, but that was the truth in my life."

Originally from the SoCal punk scene, Schleprock debuted in 1993 with the release of *Hide and Seek* on Last Resort Records. But it wasn't until the 1994 release of *Propeller*, the band's full-length on Dr. Strange Records, that they really began to get noticed. They toured with moderate success and had developed a fan base, centered primarily in southern California.

Schleprock's experiences with a major were a little more complicated than other bands' because they strayed from the musical path their previous records had set for them. Not only did they sign, but they didn't give fans what they expected. Those two combined could be—and were—ruinous.

But at least other bands don't look to Schleprock as an example of what not to do.

When asked if the experiences of any other bands have influenced his band's decision to stay on an independent label, Matthew Pryor of the Get Up Kids doesn't have to think for too long to answer.

"Absolutely," he says. "Jimmy Eat World especially. They signed a deal so early on that they were not a priority at Capitol."

No one likes to be someone else's cautionary example, but Arizona's Jimmy Eat World has become just that. Their tale of woe begins around 1994, back when they were a pop-punk band that bore little resemblance to the band's sound today.

A split 7" record with the Colorado band Christie Front Drive drew the attention of Capitol Records. Loren Israel, an A&R representative for the label, flew out to see Jimmy Eat World and ended up becoming friends with the band. They signed a developmental deal with Capitol for one record with the option of six more not long after.

"I think we were young and dumb," says Zach Lind, the band's drummer. "We kind of thought it was going to come easy. I remember being back in the van touring, betting how much we would sell. Me and Jim [Adkins, guitarist and vocalist] were the most optimistic ones. Jim was saying 'We could sell 200,000.' I was somewhere around there. Tom [Linton, guitarist and vocalist] said we'll sell around 12. Tom was right."

Not a single member of the band was older than 20 when they signed. The band had never even toured.

"We were all going to college, we all didn't like it, and we all wanted to go on tour," Lind says. "They said, 'If you go on tour, we'll buy you a van.' It was the only way out from what we saw; we weren't too keen on the idea of doing it yourself."

Texas is the Reason makes Jimmy Eat World look like rock veterans. They were talking to major labels after their first show.

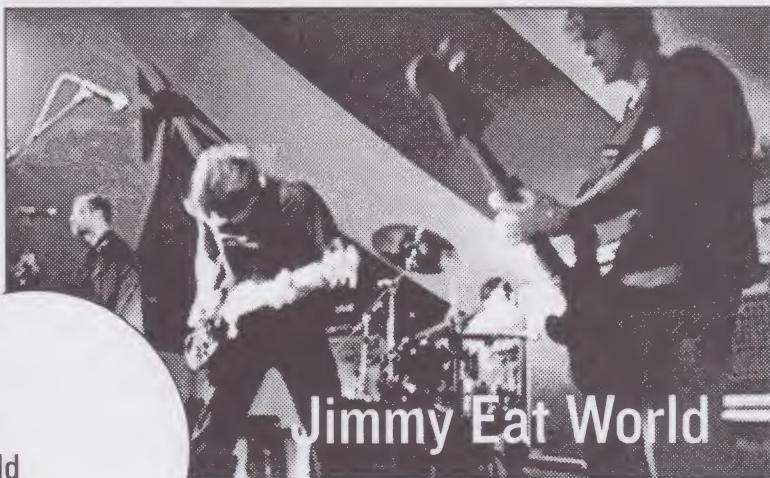
The band hailed from New York City, a town full of music industry types. Since the band was friends with some A&R reps, several representatives of the industry attended their first show, a party at guitarist Norm Arenas' house in April of 1995. But the lemming-like mentality of major labels meant that when one A&R person goes to a show, others will follow. The band had labels talking to them from the beginning.

"We didn't know who we were yet," Arenas says. "We thought it was kind of weird that anybody would want to invest money in a band that had been together for only four months."

The attention grew with the release of the band's first 7" later that month. At the time, it seemed like Texas would have to choose between two extremes: Art Monk or Jade Tree versus Atlantic. The search for middle ground led the band to sign a two-record deal with Revelation that summer.

Arenas thought labels would back off after that, but it just complicated matters. More people started to fly in for their shows.

"It happened fast, and because of that, we didn't have time to think," Arenas says. "We always felt like we were in a position that we had to make a decision now, and that's not a good position to be in when you're offered a lot of hefty ideas and potential moves to make."



Jimmy Eat World understands that position all too well. At the end of the summer of 1995, after the band's first tour, Capitol picked up the option to release the band's first record in their "developmental" deal, a phrase the band would come to loathe.

"They never really took the record that seriously," Lind says. "It was like they were kind of like letting us do the record so we could develop. That kind of peeved us because we felt we were developed."

The record seemed doomed from the moment it started being recorded. Because a couple members of the band planned

to attend college for a semester, the label wanted to split recording into two sessions. Not wanting a disruption in the middle of recording, the band fought the label's decision. They lost.

"It put our backs to the wall," says Lind, "because at that point, we had opinions, but at the same time record companies

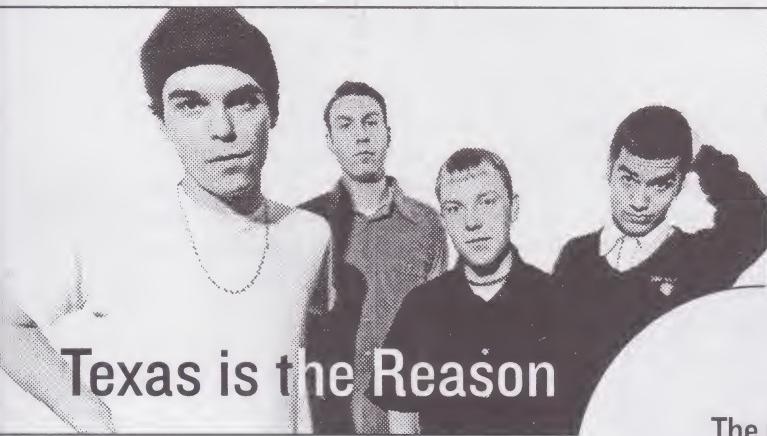


photo by John Mockus

hold over your head 'We're either going to work this record or we're not.' So we had to compromise."

The compromises didn't stop at recording. The label promoted the band like 'N Sync—promotional materials for the record emphasized how young the band was. The label tried to get the band to play at school assemblies and tell kids not to do drugs. They even had a contest where fans could make their own Jimmy Eat World video.

What Jimmy Eat World lacked in publicity, Schleprock had in spades. In the space of a year, Schleprock had gone from being a mid-sized local band in LA to being plastered on the front of the Warner Brothers newsletter. The dramatic change proved detrimental to a band still trying to figure out who they were.

Prior to signing to Warner Brothers in the summer of 1996, Schleprock had toured extensively, playing their blend of melodic, emoish punk. All the members in the band were in their late 20s at the time, and had all come from old-school punk roots with bands such as The Clash and Stiff Little Fingers. A rediscovering of these roots and a disenchantment with their set not only led them to get signed but also their eventual downfall.

"I felt the music people were singing about didn't mean anything anymore," Caine says. "Singing about my emotional feelings and girls didn't feel punk... I was sitting around

looking at these old punk records—I grew up on Sham 69 as a kid—[and thought] 'This is what I love.' I told Jeff [guitarist of Schleprock], 'I'm sick of this. Let's go home and do what we want to do.'"

Schleprock's epiphany preceded their signing to Warner Brothers by about eight months. "We quickly started changing our music and made a demo tape," Caine says, "and sure enough, we tried to make ourselves more punk and less poppy, melodic and radio friendly. Who knew they would love it?"

"They" were major labels. A song on the demo called "Suburbia," with its early-'80s punk/ska feel, eventually inspired a bidding war. Warner Brothers, Dreamworks and Geffen were knocking on the band's door. Because of the relationship Caine had with one of the representatives, the band chose to work with Warner.

The band made a decent living for about a year and a half off of signing, and they spent about \$100,000 on what would become their major-label debut, *(America's) Dirty Little Secret*. The label, convinced "Suburbia" would be a massive hit, got the hype machine going at full-steam. It wasn't long before Schleprock saw their faces emblazoned on WB's corporate newsletter.

The promise of an advance from a major label was appealing for Texas Is the Reason. "Being in a band put us in debt," guitarist Norm Arenas says. "We were going to major labels and raiding the promo bins to sell them so we could eat."

The rate at which Texas Is the Reason was moving, it seemed like they should have been on the cover of *Time* by that point. The band released a three-song, self-titled EP on

Revelation in September of 1995. A full-length produced by J. Robbins of Jawbox, called *Do You Know Who You Are?* followed in April of 1996.

The period between the two found Texas Is the Reason taking advantage of the perks of being a wanted band (free meals) without ever taking the major-label courtship too seriously. Few labels knew how to pitch them anyway.

Arenas tell the story of an A&R rep who approached Garrett Klahn, the vocalist and other guitarist for the band. Thinking he was pulling a Glengarry Glen Ross-type sales move on Klahn, the guy said, "We'll go out, and I'll buy you dinner, and maybe I'll buy you."

Once Revelation released *Do You Know Who You Are?*, Texas found themselves in the middle of a bidding war. "That's when we decided maybe we should take this seriously," Arenas says.

Texas found their options narrowed by the fact that New York's industry-heavy nature made people judge bands by their record deals. The expenses of living in the city also had a huge impact.

"One of the things with Revelation we needed to sign with them was a pretty hefty advance because being in a band put us in debt," Arenas says. "We were going to major labels and raiding the promo bins to sell them so we could eat."

To make the majors even more appealing, all of Texas' peers and friends were doing well on major labels or at least not complaining about the experience—Civ, Quicksand, Sense Field. The move to a major seemed like an inevitable one.

After a tour of Europe with Sense Field, Texas met with about eight different label presidents in Los Angeles. The band knew A&R jobs were unstable, so they wanted the label president to be someone who really liked the band and would go to bat for them. After another round of meetings and a few bumps in the road, the band decided to go with Capitol.

"I remember one meeting with this guy playing us demos of *OK Computer*," Arenas says, "and he was saying, 'This is the kind of shit we want at Capitol. It's artistic. It's challenging. We have our Everclears to pay the bills, but this is what we want.'"

The band felt it would be a good fit and went on tour, letting the legal process begin without them. "We needed some sort of break or distance from that thing because it's a mindfuck when you have people telling you how great you are and how you're going to be a star," Arenas says.

The break lasted only briefly. Texas suffered from serious internal struggles—to the point of arguing on stage, in practice, on tour and just about everywhere else. While their meal ticket was stamped, the members of Texas is the Reason now faced the possibility of being forced to stay together.

The horizon for Jimmy Eat World after the release of *Static Prevails* looked troubling as well. Despite the label's own lack-adaisical promotion, Capitol panicked. "*Static Prevails* didn't do that great by their standards," Lind says. "I always said, 'Hey listen, no one knows who we are.' They were panicking as to what to do to build our fan base without the radio, and that's something major labels can't do—at least Capitol can't. They live and die by the radio and MTV. They had no idea how to do promotional or marketing work."

The label's inept marketing ideas reached comical levels when the band's young A&R representative, Craig Aaronson, took it upon himself to drive up sales. "He was coming to Phoenix and buying CDs in stores," Lind says. "He would call my parents and the other guys' parents and say, 'Hey, go buy CDs.' He was desperate to get sales. It was baffling to us."

Lind says the band had simple requests for tour support: Put ads in weeklies, and put posters up in record stores to increase visibility. "We would see bands all the time who have posters all over record stores and all over venues, and I'm thinking, 'This band's really big,' then I find out about them," Lind says. "Then I'd think, why aren't they doing that with us?"

Once the touring and promotions were finished for *Static*, the band harbored no illusions about their place on the totem pole of Capitol's bands.

"They never took us seriously," Lind says. "By the time *Static* was over, we knew where we stood. The rest of the time we were there, we accepted it. When *Clarity* [the band's second release on Capitol] came around, we knew how they would do it. We just knew it never was going to work out."

Norman Arenas had a similar premonition, but not about working with major labels. Arenas knew that Texas is the Reason itself was never going to work out.

"Everybody in the world was more excited about it than us," Arenas says. "I was doing this tour thinking, 'Oh my God, we have to be around each other.' It was really, really bad."

Arenas came to two realizations:

- 1) He'd be locked into a band that was not fun, and 2) If the band did break up, he could conceivably be contractually obligated to Capitol for future musical projects.

"I started putting these things in my mind, and I started to think maybe this wasn't such a good idea," Arenas says. "But I didn't want to be the one to pull the rug from under everyone else's feet. Everyone else felt ecstatic; they could afford to live in New York City. Who am I to do that?"

It turned out he wasn't alone.

It happened on a tour bus as Arenas and drummer Chris Daly watched *The Simpsons*. Arenas said, "What would you say if I wanted to just quit this band?" Daley answered, "I would tell you I've been thinking the same thing every night for the last three weeks."

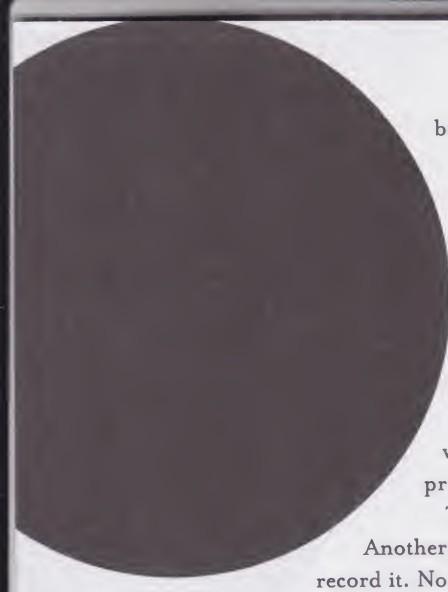
The band broke up soon after.

Schleprock, while not experiencing the same degree of interpersonal uncertainty as Texas, had problems of their own. Warner budgeted several hundred thousand dollars for the band's video shoot of "Suburbia," and the director wanted the video to be silly (a common theme with punk-related videos), and wouldn't listen to Caine's objections to the silly-video formula. Caine and the director clashed, and the label became alarmed. The failure of "Suburbia" to catch on only exacerbated the situation. While *Secret* pleased the label, its complacency seemed to rely on "Suburbia" becoming a hit.

"The minute the record didn't do anything, they all ran," Caine says. "They were sweeping it under the rug. 'I didn't do this. Whose band was that?'"

Numerous circumstances outside of the band's control combined to destroy what future they had. A merger left all of Schleprock's support staff without jobs and the band without help. The 1996 release of *Secret* put it on the latter half of the signing frenzy, and punk played a decreasing role in mainstream music for the most part. Caine says KROQ decided to stop playing "our kind of music" shortly after the release of "Suburbia." Other stations followed suit, and even though MTV played the video regularly, nothing ever caught on. Combine all these factors with the alienation of the band's core audience (who could have been a saving grace), and you have a record going nowhere. The band called it quits shortly thereafter.

The death of Schleprock coincided with Jimmy Eat World's peak disillusionment with Capitol. During the break



between the release of *Static Prevails* and the writing and recording of *Clarity*, the band played a bluff game with Capitol by threatening to break up unless they received more money. They had no intention of breaking up, but if the label invested more money in them they thought it would have more incentive to promote the band.

The result of all the drama?

Another record and \$75,000 more to record it. Nothing else changed.

The band spent 60 days in the studio recording, resulting in extremely polished *Clarity*. Capitol yawned again and sat on the record. *Clarity*, finished in August of 1998, did not make into stores until February of 1999.

Lind hoped to release it that October, getting it in just before the industry shuts down for the holidays. It provided an easy excuse for the label to hold production of the record, but truthfully, Capitol saw no commercial possibility in *Clarity*. "The label was not too stoked on it," Lind says.

To test the waters, Capitol suggested the band release an EP with a couple songs from the record on it. Essentially, if the record generated any sort of buzz, *Clarity* would be released. If not, then Jimmy Eat World would probably be dropped and the record shelved. Capitol would produce the CDs and Florida label Fueled by Ramen would produce the vinyl. The EP was supposed to be ready when the band left for tour in early November 1998, but Capitol forgot to get a signature to OK production, so the band did not have the records until the last day of tour.

Just when the band's anger apexed, KROQ in Los Angeles picked up the single "Lucky Denver Mint" and added it into their rotation. The station played it an average of three times a day, giving Capitol the green light to move forward.

"The anger left quickly because we started getting played on KROQ," Lind says. "So that took care of the problems with Capitol, and they were starting to listen to what we were saying."

But KROQ dropped the song right as *Clarity* came out, Gary Gersh was fired from Capitol Records, their A&R rep followed him and not long after, the band was released from their contract. Lind says it was the best thing that happened to them.

"It was the greatest feeling in the world," he says. "We severed ties with the label that we didn't want to be on for a long time, we fired our manager, we went to Europe, and it was the time of our lives."

With the frustrations of dealing with Capitol behind him, Lind still feels a strong sense of gratitude to the label.



"Almost every indie band I know that is somewhat successful, they're worried about getting paid from their label," Lind says. "With major labels, even though there's different risks, it's definitely corporate and a lot of people come up with stupid ideas, we always got paid what suited us. We never had to worry about them being financially unfair to us. From the end of *Static Prevails* on, we were controlling what was going on and getting paid, and we liked what we did...They bought us a van, they bought us good equipment, they took care of us. They allowed us to become a better band by the things they did for us. A lot of things they did were frustrating, but if we weren't on Capitol, people wouldn't know who we were. We'd probably still be playing in my parents' garage."

Schleprock's Caine does not share Lind's sentiments. He remains adamant that his new band, The Generators, not follow in Schleprock's footsteps.

"If you asked me today if I'd do it with my new band, no way!" he says. "I've already been through it. I know what it will do. It ruined my band. I'd never again go to a major label because I don't want anyone to ruin something so important to me."

Caine, who as a teenager was homeless on the Hollywood streets, says the band's effort to better themselves worked briefly, but the label's clumsiness ruined any chance they had.

"One day you're new, the next day you're through," he says. "The way I look at it now, you're just a new kind of toothpaste. They put a new, flashy thing on the box and see who's going to buy it. With Schleprock or Face to Face or Bad Religion, they just put a new marketing twist on it, and if it sticks, it sticks. If it doesn't, it doesn't."

Crash

Tsunamis form, swell and eventually crash into land. With the marketing tsunamis that buffeted the American mainstream in the mid-'90s, there was little impact felt on land. More than anything, the signings affected the scene that spawned them. The mainstream has its punk staples: Green Day, the Offspring and Blink-182. The memories of the bands who followed in their footsteps have long since left the minds of the majority of consumers. At the quake's epicenter, however, everyone remembers.

"Everyone was sort of caught up in the whole momentum of it all more so than the reality of it," says Lance Hahn of the venerable East Bay band J Church. "No one had any perspective back then, just because everything was happening, and no one had paid attention to those bands in that kind of way before."

Jade Tree's Walters takes an equally realistic view. "Now that we have some distance from that period of time, it seems easier to deal with the mess that was left behind," he says. "Labels and bands have some sense now that majors could very well be just a pipe dream, and that it may not be all that it is worth."

In the mid-'90s, before the success of bands such as the Promise Ring, Lifetime and Jets to Brazil, two guys ran Jade Tree Records out of a house in Delaware. Since then, the label has grown considerably to become one of the most respected independent labels in the scene. With growing success comes more incentive for bands to stay independent; just look at

Epitaph in the mid-'90s.

"I feel like a label like us has a good chance at beating a major label for two reasons: our 50-50 royalty rate and our well-respected reputation," Walters says. "These things are universally known, and as we gain more success as an indie label, and some of our bands get bigger, we prove that there is more available to the bands that stay independent and do things on their own terms."

Marc Ruvolo of Johann's Face Records agrees with Walters—so long as the band's terms don't come back to haunt him.

"I stay away from bands who want to use my label as a stepping stone to the majors," he says. "It is one of the first questions I ask a band. I believe that for most bands it is a foolish choice."

But Ruvolo says that the siren song of fame often leads bands to make the choice anyway, however foolish it may be. "Everyone wants to be a star," he says. "Many will tell you the opposite, but you would be a fool to believe them. Punk rock or not, it is impossible to escape the brainwashing of our media-oriented society. The rockstar is something everyone secretly and not so secretly aspires to be."

A&R rep Mike Gitter echoes Ruvolo's sentiments. "I think in general people have egos," Gitter says. "Regardless of their political affiliations or artistic affiliations, they have egos that like to be stroked. There is nothing better than scoring a record deal and having people dedicate large chunks of their life to you. When it doesn't work, it's tough. I think some people woke up and said, 'Hey, what I do didn't work.' Some of them are playing music still, some of them are not. Call it a process of weeding out. I think that honesty and the admission of that honesty has built a lot of stronger artists."

Why didn't it work? Why did bands who seemed on the verge of stardom fizzle while others outside of that caste thrive?

Why? No single answer for that exists.

"I think it's 50-50," Gitter says. "Yes, it's the responsibility for record labels to understand the animal they've signed, but it's also the responsibility of the band to understand what label they've signed to."

Steve Albini sees another reason. "They were moved out of a club environment and moved out of the sort of self-defining

common rock underground," Albini says. "They moved out of that and were put in competition with TLC and Cher and crap like that, where the things that define them don't mean much."

But, Albini contends, the signing boom did have some positives. "It's shaken the tree and kicked out a lot of squirrels," Albini says. "A lot of people who had no business making and selling records have retreated or moved directly to the mainstream arena. Several record labels that formed alliances with major labels in hopes of exploiting the market share have been shunned by major labels; it's somewhat embarrassing on a professional level. It made people like me, who were snickering at the whole thing, feel justified."

This changing face of independent music, from which his label profited almost more than any other, eventually led Larry Livermore to cede control of Lookout Records.

"I left Lookout more than three years ago because too many aspects of the business were no longer fun, and some of them were absolutely pernicious," Livermore says. "I never set out to be a businessman sitting in an office and making deals, and when I realized that that was what I had become, I got out of there," he says. "I sometimes wonder what would have happened if we hadn't grown so big so fast, if I might still be running the label out of my bedroom, which I did until 1995, even when we were already getting sales in the



photo by Tim Owen

"Don't judge bands because they're trying to do what's best for their situation," says Sense Field's John Bunch, "and don't judge bands that stick their necks out. We stuck our necks out, and it got chopped, but not chopped off. We're not dead."

millions of dollars. I used to think what a great joke that was, that three doofuses in a bedroom were outselling all these 'serious' record labels with fancy office buildings and dozens of employees.

Unfortunately, eventually we ended up in an office building, too, and it was about then that much of the fun started going out of it," Livermore says.

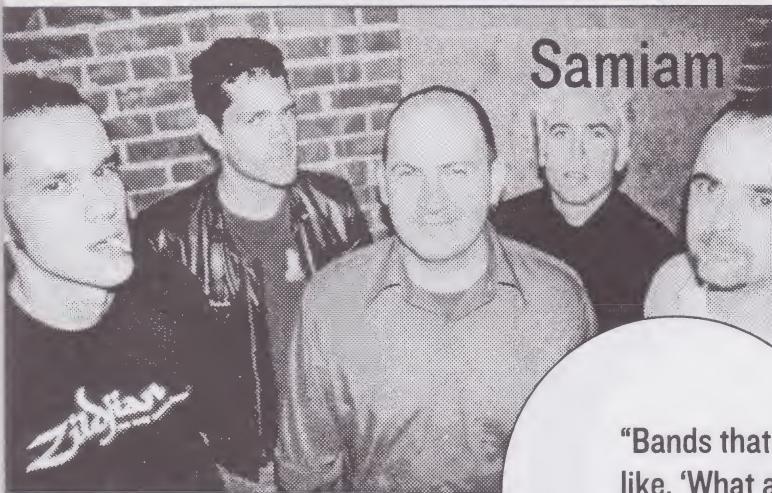
Jawbreaker's Baurmeister feels a similar sense of sadness when looking back. "I wish sometimes we hadn't signed," he says. "There were good things about it, but it was lackluster closing to something that had potential to be much more vibrant."

Few other bands express Baurmeister's regret. And few are willing to accept the judgement of those who haven't experienced the process first hand.

"You can't understand the situation unless you've gone through it," Sense Field's Bunch says. "Don't judge bands because they're trying to do what's best for their situation and don't judge bands that stick their necks out. We stuck our necks out, and it got chopped, but not chopped off. We're not dead."

Texas is the Reason's Arenas agrees. "I have a problem with people so staunchly anti-major label that have never been on one. I have a problem with that, to knock an industry out of the water. Major labels are right for a lot of bands and wrong for a lot of bands."

Unfortunately, even if a band feels that a major label is "right" for them, there's no such thing as a sure thing, says A&R rep Gitter. "There are histories in thousands of scenes and thousands of bands, some of which have gone onto great success and some of which have gone onto obscurity," he says. "For every Blink-182, there's a Wool."



The only thing the industry really understands, Gitter explains, is what it has already seen. "You feed the corporate machine what it traditionally likes, and it will work," Gitter says. "You feed it something that is a little out of sync, and it's a roll of the dice."

That crapshoot, says J Church's Hahn, wasn't worth the risk it posed to his band, which was exhaustively courted during the '94 boom. "Once you get passed the dinners and free drinks and start to really think about it, and you look at the statistics, no matter what period, the odds are really against you," Hahn says. "Considering the odds are still against you making money, what's the point? It's sort of like suddenly at my life at

28 deciding I'm going to become a boxer."

Amazingly, there are still bands looking to step into the ring. Bands like the Promise Ring, At the Drive In, the Get Up Kids and Saves the Day—today's Captains of Industry—have considered moving to major labels.

"I don't think of the major-label world as inherently evil," says Jason Gnewikow, guitarist for the Promise Ring. "I don't have any automatic opposition to it. I feel like there are a lot bigger things to worry about in life. If you want to be a band like Fugazi that's really idealistic and where the main purpose of the band is to change something or stand for something, then yeah, I could see why you'd be opposed to it. But if you're a band that just wants to write music, then major labels can be really good things."

Matthew Pryor of the Get Up Kids sees the same advantage. "The benefit of majors is that they have the money to promote bands to their fullest potential, whereas most indies are run by one person or a few people at most and just don't have funds to promote or distribute a record as well," he says. "[But] The flip side to that is that [majors] only promote the records that they want to, either because the band is already selling, or the label thinks that the band is going to be big. I would say that almost every band that had a bad experience on a major label had something to do with the lack of attention or promotion, etc., that they got or didn't get at a label. Most majors will promote a record for a month, and if it's not a hit, then all funding is pulled."

More than any other factor, timing has kept the Get Up Kids and the Promise Ring from signing. "To be honest, what label you are on has nothing to do with the music you make," Pryor says. "The label is a strictly business decision, and at this point, it makes way more sense to be on an indie."

Ditto for New Jersey's Saves the Day, who recently signed a two-record deal with Vagrant, the same indie as the Get Up Kids. Their decision to stay on an independent label surprised many industry types; Gitter said the band gave up "instant

Blink-dom" by going with Vagrant. Their contract stipulates, however, they can leave after one record (after compensating Vagrant, of course).

"We weren't ready to give it that major-label shot," says drummer Bryan Newman. "I think

about it every day, 'Did we make the right decision?' But it feels like we did."

Newman feels a strong ambivalence about his band's situation, as a lot of bands do. Stay or go? Is this right?

"I worry about missing the boat," Newman says. "The truth is that the only indie band that really broke was the

"Bands that didn't make it, none of them are like, 'What am I going to do with my life?' Coming out of the punk scene, people have a perspective of how much tougher it is," Samiam's Serge Loobkoff says. "They have that perspective so when they do get—or don't get—really big, they know how to handle it."



Offspring. So I worry about that, but at the same time, it's not the most important thing to me in the world to be some huge band. I kind of like it now that my entire existence isn't defined by the band."

For El Paso's At the Drive-In, signing is no longer hypothetical. Last year, they were the first band to sign to DEN, a new Internet-based label started by ex-Capitol president Gary Gersh. The band originally planned to sign to Reprise, but Gersh impressed them so much that they took a chance with DEN. The label went out of business earlier this year. The band is now on Capitol subsidiary Grand Royal.

"It was a really tough decision," says guitarist Jim Ward. "To see some of our favorite bands get ignored and slaughtered, then you have the backlash from the kids, and no one likes you anymore. That's always bummed me out. I think watching older bands go through the stuff they went through at one time made me think there's no place for this music on major labels, but at the same time, those records are great. I don't think you should put them down for it; it's phenomenal music, and whether the mainstream gets into it or not shouldn't bother anybody."

Even while acknowledging the pitfalls that befell bands before his, Ward echoes those same bands' reasons for moving to a major. "It gives us the chance to get our music out to more people, which is something I think is important. It's not about being rockstars; it's about sharing your music."

But the want to "share their music" that led Jawbreaker, Jawbox, the Smoking Popes and all the others to sign with major labels panned out for only a single band: Green Day. The odds aren't in the artists' favor. There are many more failed bands than ones that make it big.

Perhaps no one understands the odds better than Billie Joe Armstrong. "What happened to my band is a very rare thing to happen to a punk band, if not the rarest," says Armstrong. Even if Green Day had not become pop-culture icons for punk rock, he says it wouldn't have mattered. Nor does it matter that their label has completely changed staff three times in seven years. Of course, when you sell a few million records, you can make your own rules.

"We're just like, 'Hey, we're still living in the Bay Area and writing our fucking stupid songs,'" Armstrong says. "Regardless of who's putting out our records, I'm still going to be playing music. It's in my blood. If it wasn't, I would have cashed in my chips after the 'When I Come Around' single."

Although he strongly urges bands not to sign right now because of the climate of mainstream music, he also advises bands to believe in themselves.

"Trust your instincts and have fun because you don't know if it's going to last, and don't listen to anybody," he says. "Go with yourself, and go with what you know, and if you don't know that, go with what you think you know."

Going with what they know—punk rock and DIY—has helped the bands that survived their stints on major labels continue on, says Samiam's Loobkoff.

"Bands that didn't make it, none of them are like, 'What am I going to do with my life?' Coming out of the punk scene, people have a perspective of how much tougher it is," he says. "They have that perspective so when they do get—or don't get—really big, they know how to handle it. People who don't come from that have no idea how good it is or how bad it is to play in a basement."

Bands start out in the basement and work their way out, hoping to never return. But most come back. It's a cycle that is reflected throughout the history of popular music.

"Every time a grassroots musical development comes along," Lookout's Livermore says, "like rock and roll in the '50s, or the British Invasion or acid-rock explosion of the '60s, everybody jumps in on the act and distorts the marketplace until what was beautiful and real about the music is lost and strangled in red tape and deals. Then somebody (like the early punks), gets the idea of getting back to basics, and the whole process starts over again."

In the case of tsunamis, the changes in the shape of the ocean floor that send the waves out cause ridges of water to rise up on the surface to echo the changes occurring underwater. It's a particularly violent, disorienting image as water rises and falls in all directions because of the shifting ocean floor. Yet when the movement has ceased, and gravity takes hold, the water returns to its natural, calm state. No ridges, no out-of-place ripples, smooth as glass. Even though a few things have been moved around underwater, the surface—the part the world sees—is completely restored. But the ocean never stays still for long. ☺

43.84

756	23/16	2215/16	2215/16	-5/16
697	22/16	22	223/16	+1/16
1125	21/16	207/8	211/16	-
49	249/16	243/8	249/16	+3/16
7265	366/16	297/16	30	-1/16
570	79/16	77/16	77/16	-1/16
526	73/16	7	7	-1/16

39/16	23/16	2613/16	161/8	All
25/16	22/16	22	223/16	All
81V2409/16	All	20	21/16	All
445/8	271/8	445/8	271/8	All
55	All	55	29/16	All
25/16	22/16	22	223/16	All
25/16	211/8	207/8	211/16	All
49	209/16	243/8	249/16	All
49	209/16	297/16	30	-1/16

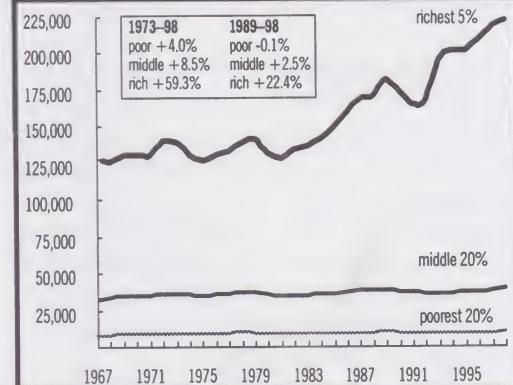
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81V2409/16	All	20	21/16	All
445/8	271/8	445/8	271/8	All
55	All	55	29/16	All
25/16	22/16	22	223/16	All
25/16	211/8	207/8	211/16	All
49	209/16	243/8	249/16	All
49	209/16	297/16	30	-1/16

rich +22.4%
middle +2.5%
poor -0.1%

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20.4

income of poor, middle class, and richest households, 1998 dollars
1967-1998

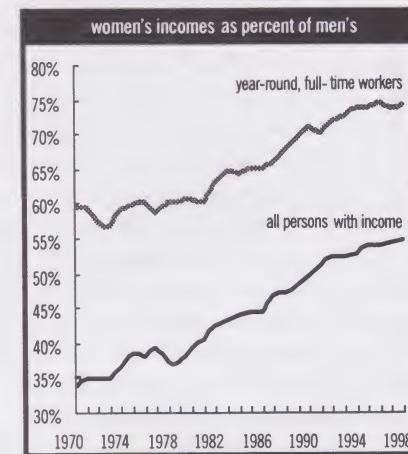
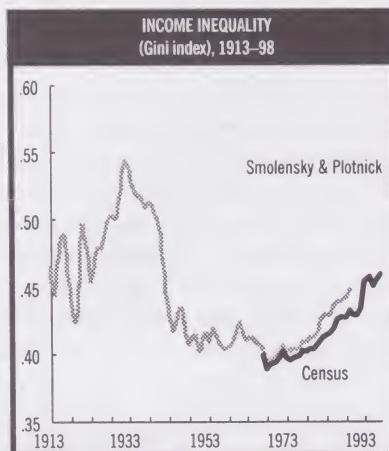


Boom" is the word typically used to describe the U.S. economy these days. The term is true enough if you own stocks, but what about everyone else? You hear a lot of claims these days about how this boom, unlike the 1980s, is broadly democratic, with everyone participating, and not just CEOs and financiers. More exuberant sorts celebrate the toppling of old hierarchies, and the birth of an egalitarian networked society in their place.

While that may be true in elite imaginations, but it's not on view in the most recent income estimates published by the Census Bureau. According to those, the median US household—the one in the very middle of the income distribution, with half the households above it, and half below—was only just a hair better off in 1998 than it was in 1989. In fact, most of the boom years have been devoted to recovering the income losses of the early 1990s. Poor households—those in the bottom 20% of the income distribution—still haven't recovered 1989's level. And this in a time when the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was up almost 30% after adjustment for inflation—4% per capita, after accounting for population increase.

Whom?

by Doug Henwood

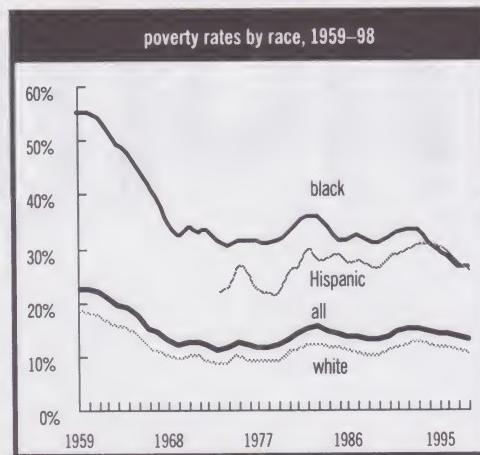
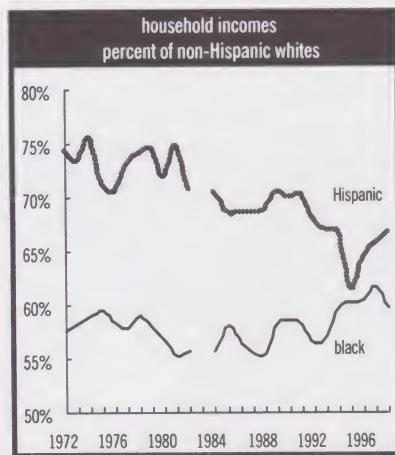


So where'd all the growth go? It went mainly into the pockets of the richest 5%, whose incomes are up 22% since 1989, with more than half of it coming in the last five years. (And though the Census figures don't show it, other sources show that those gains mainly went to the top 1–2%.) Inequality of family incomes in 1998, as measured by the Gini index, was at its highest ever since the Census Bureau started publishing annual figures in 1947; that for the broader category of households (which includes singles and nonfamily arrangements) fell slightly from 1997's record level. Figures for years before 1947 are hard to come by, but by at least one measure—that assembled by Eugene Smolensky and Robert Plotnick—the US hasn't seen this level of polarization since the 1930s. The figures are much worse than the 1980s, when people used to worry more loudly about inequality; now, with a Democrat in the White House, think-tank liberals are less likely to moan.

Finer details

The gender gap narrowed slightly from 1997 to 1998, but that progress has slowed considerably in recent years. Women earned 54% as much as men in 1998, barely higher than 4 years earlier. For year-round, full-time workers, women earned 74% as much as men, slightly lower than in 1996. It's hard to tell whether this is just a pause, or something of longer-term significance; one reason to believe the former is that men tend to work in more cyclical industries, like manufacturing, so they do relatively better in good times and relatively worse in bad ones. But maybe women have run into an economy-wide glass ceiling. We'll see.

Young people today are making millions on their stock options! America is the classless society, the prosperous envy of the world—without anyone feeling the need to offer evidence.



Racial/ethnic gaps are a mixed bag. Though the black/white differential has been closing raggedly since the late 1980s, that's not true of the last couple of years (though it should be pointed out that this is because white incomes were up more strongly than black, not because of a decline in black incomes). So-called "Hispanic" households—the skeptical phrasing and punctuation is an expression of doubt that this category has much analytical power, given the vast difference between the groups gathered under this single label—have been doing better in recent years. But that bounce barely compensates for the widening of the income gap from the early 1980s into the early 1990s, which is mainly the result of the arrival of poorer immigrants.

Poverty

The poverty rate declined slightly from 1997 to 1998, from 11.6% to 11.2% — but the trend over the last 20 years has been remarkably flat, despite supposed boom conditions. And that's by a very flawed measure. The US poverty line was established nearly 50 years ago, on the basis of some very casual research: the government's estimate of a minimal food budget was simply multiplied by three, on the rationale that households spent an average of one-third of their incomes on food, and that level has been adjusted for inflation ever since. No adjustment has been made for rising average incomes or changing consumption norms. As a result, the poverty line has continued to decline as a percentage of median incomes—from 43% of the median in 1959 to 33% in 1982 to 28% in 1998. Were poverty defined more reasonably—like, say, half the median

income, a common metric among academic researchers — U.S. poverty rates would be half again to twice as high as they are.

The good news about poverty is that the black poverty rate is the lowest on record, by a very flawed measure. The bad news is that almost 28% of female-headed households are officially poor, and 19% of our children live in poor households. The amount of money it would take to bring all officially poor households up to the poverty line is amazingly small: 0.5% of GDP, or just over 3% of the income of the richest fifth of households. It would take a bit more money to bring the poor up to a civilized standard, but not that much. Clearly it's much more important that the affluent be able to buy stocks and SUVs than to accomplish this bleeding-heart goal.

It's amazing how much of public discourse, and not only about economics, proceeds in complete detachment from fact. Inspiring things are simply asserted—these days, we're all entrepreneurs! Young people today are making millions on their stock options! America is the classless society, the prosperous envy of the world—without anyone feeling the need to offer evidence. Evidence is boring, and can ruin a good story. And good stories are so much more fun!

This article was adapted from Left Business Observer, issue #93 (February 2000). For info on LBO, write to Village Station — PO Box 953, New York NY 10014-0704, or email dhenwood@panix.com, or visit www.panix.com/~dhenwood/LBO_home.html.

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PUNK PLANET

Issue #3 October 1999

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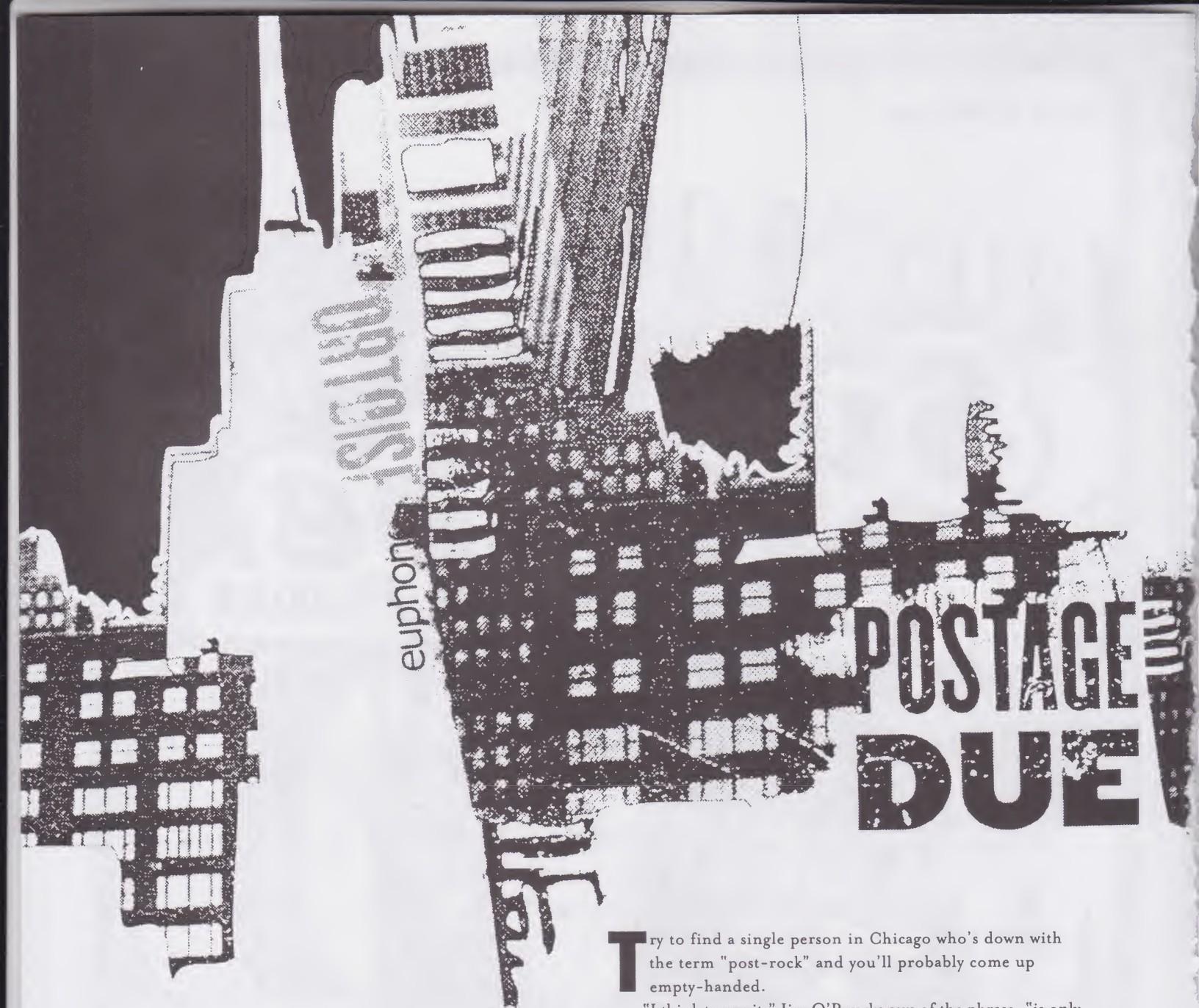
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POSTAGE DUE

Try to find a single person in Chicago who's down with the term "post-rock" and you'll probably come up empty-handed.

"I think to use it," Jim O'Rourke says of the phrase, "is only to further confound and distract people from listening to music on a one-to-one basis, instead of relating the music to a social function. To hell with that."

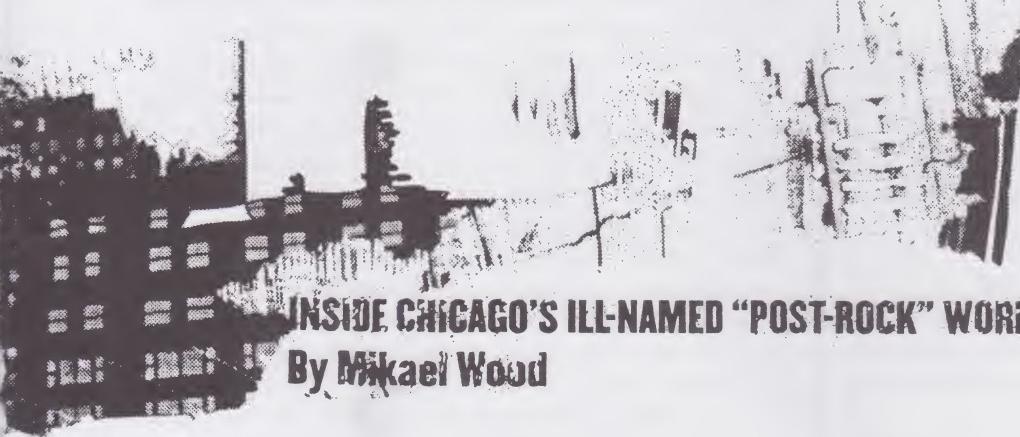
O'Rourke is one of a growing handful of Chicago musicians who's found himself stuck in the "post-rock" penalty box, a hard-to-define aggregate of Windy City-based artists ranging from local heroes Tortoise to young upstarts Joan of Arc. Who fits in the box is as difficult to pin down as what the term means. But the phrase (and the scene that's been saddled with it) has undeniably changed the way rock in Chicago rolls.

Compare and contrast: It's the mid '80s, a Saturday night around ten. You feel like seeing some live music, so you call up your buds and head out on the town, sporting your freshly pressed black Touch and Go T-shirt. Who do you see? All things

considered, probably a band spitting out loud, guitar-based rock: Big Black, Naked Raygun or The Didjits. You bang your head for a while, buy some new 7"s at the merch table and head home happy and contented.

Flash forward 15 years: It's last night and you're in the mood to hang out in a smoky bar with way too many people talking way too loudly while a short guy in a button-up Oxford shirt and horn-rimmed glasses plays some quiet-ass acoustic guitar while trying hard not to notice you or anyone else watching him. Where do you go? The same place you went a decade and a half ago.

The question then presents itself: How did this happen? How did Chicago go from rocking to post-rocking in the time it took you to graduate from high school? And, more importantly, what is "post-rock"? Is it the melodic, bass-heavy instrumental music found on Tortoise's *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*? The Brazilian-kissed electronic pop that makes up the bulk of the Sea and Cake's *The Fawn*? The knotty acoustic alchemy that defines Gastr del Sol's early work?



INSIDE CHICAGO'S ILL-NAMED "POST-ROCK" WORLD

By Mikael Wood

Apparently, it's all of these. And more.

"I would say that the shifts in the 'main scene' of Chicago are coming out of an intersection of different ideas happening in the same city," says Ken Vandermark, a long-time devotee of Chicago's mix-and-match approach and a recent winner of a prestigious MacArthur Foundation Genius grant. Vandermark is unquestionably one of the brightest spots in the city's jazz scene, but as much as he's a jazzbo, the saxophonist is a rocker, guesting on rock records like Superchunk's *Come Pick Me Up* (which, in a typically Chicagoan twist of synchronicity, O'Rourke produced) and holding down residencies at the Empty Bottle, a Chicago club frequented by as many touring rock bands as local jazz ones. Vandermark's resume reads like a map of recent Windy City activity, bridging gaps that exist between musics in other places.

"Many of the players in the improvised music scene work with the rock musicians in town," he says of Chicago. "Players from both sectors go and see each others' work in performance or listen to it on record. There is an intense curiosity about what music is and can be in this city."

Tim Rutili knows that curiosity. "Most of my friends are in their thirties and are kind of growing out of super-loud noise,"

he admits. "I think it's best if you mix elements from music that you love with something that you never heard before but always wanted to."

Rutili occupies an interesting space in the scheme of Chicago things. He used to front Red Red Meat, a band that put out a few relatively straightforward records on Sub Pop in the mid '90s and toured with Smashing Pumpkins on that band's *Siamese Dream* tour in 1993. But Rutili is currently making the weirdest music of his life under the name Califone and releasing similarly bizarre stuff through his Perishable Records, a label that's virtually cornered the market on records that split the difference between ex-hippie residue and dub-based extrapolation. Which is to say: If there's room in the post-rock ward for both Vandermark's avant skronk and Rutili's deconstructed blues, what kind of label is this anyway?

"I think the music here is unified by its aesthetic, not by its exact sound," says John Hughes Jr., owner of Hefty Records, a young Chicago indie that's released records by post-Cap'n Jazz outfit Ghosts and Vodka and Hughes' own project, Slicker. The label represents a new breed of smaller independent labels that have appeared in the wake of the city's bigger, internationally known ones: namely, Thrill Jockey, Drag City and Touch and Go.

Touch and Go, which owner Corey Rusk started in Michigan in 1981 and moved to Chicago six years later, is in many ways the bedrock upon which the scene sits. "You always kind of look to see who else succeeded in what you're doing and try to take example from them," label publicist Scott Giampiano says. "I think Touch and Go kind of is a model. We're pretty vocal; if people come up, we'll tell them what we think."

"I set up the structure of my label based largely on what Touch and Go and Dischord had done," Thrill Jockey owner Bettina Richards acknowledges. Richards' label, which she moved to Chicago from New York in 1994, has garnered a reputation as one of the United States' premier independents, releasing many of the records—including Tortoise's and the Sea and Cake's catalogs—for which the current scene has become known. Richards and others agree that Touch and Go has served as a model of DIY operation, setting the standard for independent production and distribution and inspiring dozens of Chicago music fans to launch their own enterprises.

"When I moved to Chicago, I was a fan of Touch and Go," Howard Greynolds, one of Richards' employees, concurs. In 1995, Greynolds started his own pair of labels, Overcoat and All City Records, which, like Hefty, are members of the city's growing freshman class. The labels' rosters, which include country-fried space rockers Knife in the Water and Appalachian bard Will Oldham, point to the diversity of what labels in Chicago are

TOP 10 MOST ESSENTIAL "POST-ROCK" ALBUMS

by Mikael Wood

Narrowing down what records can be considered "essential" to Chicago's contemporary underground music scene is as problematic an act as delineating exactly what Chicago's contemporary underground music scene is. Nevertheless, here's one take on 10 albums that have defined an era, in chronological order:

1. Slint, *Spiderland* (Touch and Go, 1991)

Though they weren't actually from Chicago, Louisville, Kentucky's Slint in large part set the stage for what would go down in the city over the next decade, introducing an instrumental complexity and abstraction to indie rock's typically slackjawed slum.

2. Shrimp Boat, *Cavale* (Bar/None, 1993)

The final record by Chicago oddballs Shrimp Boat is a stylistic grab-bag, plopping Caribbean motifs next to blue-eyed soul and proto-jazz noodling next to tight pop structures. The band included former Sea and Cake members Sam Prekop and Eric Clapton, as well as Brad Wood, who would go on to produce many of Chicago's significant alt-rock records, like Liz Phair's *Exile in Guyville*.

3. Tortoise, *Tortoise* (Thrill Jockey, 1994)

Tortoise's seminal debut is an understated masterpiece, offering a minimalist version of the instrumental bouillabaisse the band would hone for years to come.

4. The Sea and Cake, *The Sea and Cake* (Thrill Jockey, 1994)

A sonic breath of fresh air, the Sea and Cake's 1994 debut is a pastel-only evocation of clean, open spaces and light, airy currents.

5. Tortoise, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (Thrill Jockey, 1996)

Tortoise's second album is anchored by the genre-defining "Djed," a 20-minute tour de force that synthesizes most of what the band's done to date: textural, lyrical guitar atmospherics; studio-as-instrument sonic tweaking; and a propulsive kraut-informed rhythmic chug.

6. Gastr del Sol, *Upgrade and Afterlife* (Drag City, 1996)

Upgrade and Afterlife caught David Grubbs and Jim O'Rourke midway between the difficult experimentation of early records like *Crooki, Crackt, or Fly* and the orchestral grandeur of the duo's swan song, 1998's *Camoufleur*.

7. Trans Am, *Trans Am* (Thrill Jockey, 1996)

Maryland trio Trans Am are the most explicitly rockist band of the post-rock bunch. Accordingly, their (surprisingly hilarious) 1996 full-length debut nods to Texan boogie-rockers ZZ Top as much as to German Krautrockers Neu!.

8. Isotope 217, *The Unstable Molecule* (Thrill Jockey, 1997)

Isotope was formed by several members of Tortoise and a couple of Chicago jazz players. *The Unstable Molecule* sounds like what that would sound like, offering an intriguing vision of the rock-jazz rendezvous.

9. Tortoise, *TNT* (Thrill Jockey, 1998)

Tortoise's third album, though not as groundbreaking as the first two, made evident the effect of the extensive remixing the band had submitted its work to since its first record. It also introduced jazz guitarist Jeff Parker as an integral member of the group.

10. Jim O'Rourke, *Eureka* (Drag City, 1999)

The most cohesive statement yet released in the emerging retro-pop strand of Chicago rock, Eureka is a brilliant John Fahey-meets-Burt Bacharach slice of tuneful, technical folk-informed pop.

releasing, suggesting that the aesthetic Hughes mentions is an open-armed acceptance of different, sometimes wildly divergent sounds—something Touch and Go, by issuing records as disparate as the Delta 72's *The R and B of Membership* and the Rachel's' *Music for Egon Schiele*, was instrumental in establishing.

"A lot of the local labels support a wide variety of music," confirms Danielle Soto, owner of Southern Records, a label that splits its operations between Chicago and London. "Touch & Go will put out Blonde Redhead and Calexico, Thrill Jockey will put out Tortoise and Freakwater, we've put out U2 and Karate. As musically different as these bands are, there is a common bond."

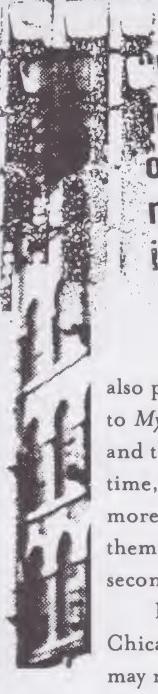
That bond, as Vandermark indicates, seems to be nothing so much as a simple desire to ignore the barriers that often compartmentalize and marginalize independent music—choosing to embrace instead of exclude. "The ghettoization of our new music takes it out of our hands and puts it in the man's own backyard," Drag City owner Dan Koretzky maintains. Since first attracting attention in 1990 for releasing early records by Pavement and Royal Trux, Drag City, like Thrill Jockey, has become synonymous with the Chicago scene, giving a home to O'Rourke and guitarist David Pajo's post-Slint projects.

"What this town has been perceived as and what it has actually been are two different things," Koretzky continues. "We've certainly had no affinity for either the loud rock or the jazz-inflected things as pigeonholes, preferring instead the freedom to go to extremes—or shoot for the middle of the road, which ever works."

Southern's Soto agrees. "Chicago has supported all types of music," she says, "and you can see a lot of overlapping fans at all sorts of shows ranging from acoustic sounds, one-person bands, skronking jazz, ethereal music, dub-influenced, punk and just plain old rock."

But how did Chicago develop this appetite? And why did Chicagoans give up their categorical predilections? Most of the players agree that it's been a natural, organic evolution. "Music has changed a lot in the last 20 years," Tortoise's Jeff Parker figures. "The way people listen to music has changed a great deal, so naturally, the way people make music would change as well."

"When I moved here in '85," Parker's bandmate John Herndon says, "I was definitely into punk rock and going to shows and stuff, but the longer that I was here and the longer that I was a musician, playing in that kind of style just seemed like running on a treadmill to me. My friend Doug McCombs [who



“Musicians coming to Chicago these days...are probably into Tortoise or the Sea and Cake and move here to noodle aimlessly on their instruments. I think you can actually learn a lot more noodling around aimlessly than growing your hair long and trying to get guys in ponytails to buy you dinner.”

also plays in Tortoise and performs solo as Brokeback] hipped me to *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* by Brian Eno and David Byrne and the Talking Heads record that was made around the same time, *Remain in Light*. I just started to kind of get more and more into those kinds of sounds and wanted to experiment with them or try to do something that was less loud." He pauses for a second. "Or maybe it was just the people that I met."

Meeting people seems to be a common thread amongst the Chicago cognoscenti, leading to hook-ups and jam sessions that may not go down as easily or as frequently in other cities. Tim Kinsella, who used to sing in Cap'n Jazz and now fronts Joan of Arc, one of the younger bands that gets roped into the post-rock herd, appreciates the city's fraternal spirit. "When Cap'n Jazz broke up," he explains, "it was a year before Joan of Arc started. And it wasn't like I wasn't playing music at all, I was playing with all these different people."

Rutilli agrees. "There are a lot of good people here," he notes. "I can think of 10 people right now that I would love to record or play with that I haven't played with yet. It seems to be more project-oriented than band-centered."

Jim O'Rourke's as good a testament to that sentiment as anyone, having worked on a score of records, including the latest full-lengths by Stereolab and Sonic Youth, since the 1997 dissolution of Gastr del Sol, the band he shared with ex-Squirrel Bait member David Grubbs. Still, he's less romantic about Chicago's collaborative vim. "I think basically it's geographic," he says. "You don't have to go far to meet someone interesting."

O'Rourke's no-frills logic is shared by many with stakes in the business side of Chicago's scene. Though what goes on on the shores of Lake Michigan can in part be chalked up to the serendipitous convergence of a bunch of right people at the right time, it's also got a lot to do with bottom-line economics and cold, hard pragmatism.

"I moved here without any conceptual nirvana about Chicago, but because I couldn't afford to run Thrill Jockey and live in New York City anymore," Bettina Richards concedes. "It was taking too much time and I couldn't hold down my record store job and pay my rent. You can be a musician in Chicago and find a space that allows you to have practice space at home," she explains. "You can have a studio environment—from a four-track cassette recorder on up to ProTools—and be able to work and pay your rent and still have time to play in multiple groups."

Geography also played a part in Southern's decision to set up shop in Chicago, says Soto. "We are able to be in a part of the country which enables bands to tour through our city and expose themselves to our ears and eyes," she says.

Steve Albini, who as an engineer and a musician has played an integral role in basically everything related to the Chicago music scene since the early '80s, sees the city as a practical choice, too. "Chicago's a very easy place to get things done," he says. "There are a lot of supply-and-demand issues in other places, where if you want to build something, you have to somehow get a hold of the materials to build it with. Everything comes through Chicago sooner or later, so you can get just about anything you need." Electrical Audio, Albini's well-equipped, state-of-the-art studio complex, speaks to his belief in the city's functionality.

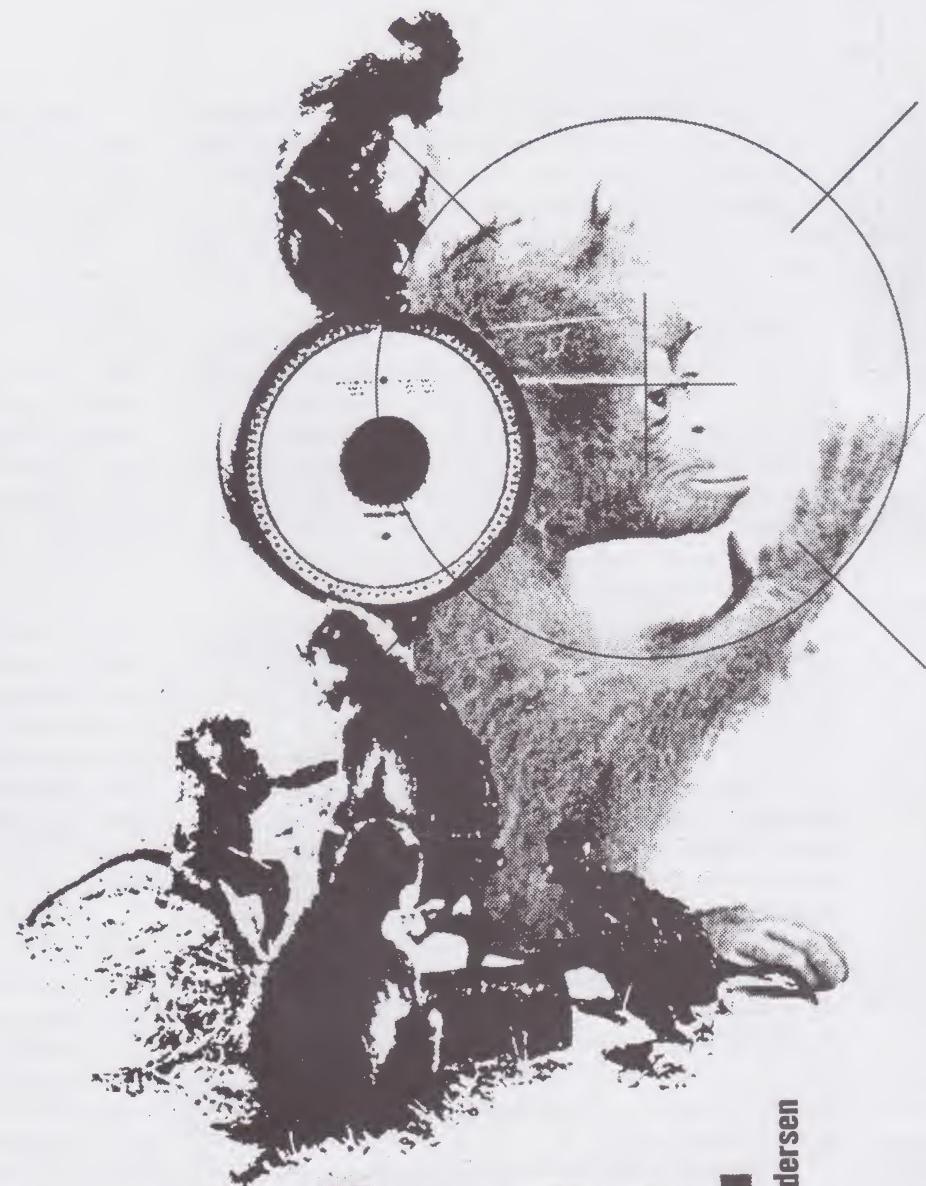
Many also point to the relative lack of record-industry presence in Chicago as a significant catalyst for recent goings-on. "I think it's easy to hide away in Chicago," Rutilli says. "There really isn't a lot of pressure to succeed on major-label pop-music terms."

But that's not always the case. In the early '90s, after Seattle's grunge explosion withered, the major-label machine turned its ear to Chicago, looking for the next big-money ticket. It found several in Smashing Pumpkins, Urge Overkill, Veruca Salt and Liz Phair, and the city became a hotspot for the quickly surfacing alternative nation.

Today, though, that seems like ancient history. Most of the higher-profile artists making music in Chicago today remain staunchly independent, aware of what happened to their peers last time Chicago was a buzzword.

"Musicians coming to Chicago these days," Rutilli elaborates, "are probably into Tortoise or the Sea and Cake and move here to noodle aimlessly on their instruments. I think you can actually learn a lot more noodling around aimlessly than growing your hair long and trying to get guys in ponytails to buy you dinner."

Observing the work being done in Chicago, it's difficult to disagree. Though there seems to be less of a buzz in the city these days—the upcoming release of the Sea and Cake's fifth album in October feels more like a long-awaited visit from an old friend than a calculated bid for the limelight—things are in full swing, with new bands and new labels and new fans getting in on the action every day. ☺



The Great Apes' Last Days

By Kari Lydersen

The Great Apes—chimpanzees, orangutans, bonobos and gorillas—are humans' closest living relatives. In fact they share 97 percent to 98 percent of our DNA. They also share many of our best traits, researchers say, while lacking some of our worst. But because of extreme world poverty and the war, exploitation of natural resources and socio-economic upheaval it causes, the scientists who know them best say the great apes are hurtling toward extinction. These scientists, veterinarians, conservationists, zoo keepers, economists and others who study the great apes have been working to ensure their survival into the 21st century—but their work may not be enough.

Orangutans in Borneo

The work Dr. Birute Galdikas has done with orangutans in Borneo—an island in Indonesia—will never be replicated. Galdikas, along with Jane Goodall and Diane Fossey, is known as one of the "three angels" of primate research—no other humans have come close to the intensity and length of work these three women have done—Galdikas with orangutans, Goodall with chimps and Fossey, who was murdered by poachers in 1985, with gorillas. All three studied under the legendary anthropologist Dr. Louis Leaky.

Starting at age 25 in 1971, Galdikas has lived with the orangutans for almost 30 years. Orangutans, which live for about 60 years, live only on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra, two of the largest islands on earth. Borneo is divided between the countries of Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.

In that time, Galdikas has come to know three to four generations of animals, with some of her subjects still living. Her early

research, in pristine colonies of orangutans then relatively untouched by man, allowed her to make groundbreaking behavioral discoveries which could only be done with such intense, longitudinal study. She was the first to discover that in natural, undisturbed circumstances, orangutans wait a full eight years between giving birth, different than the several years in artificial zoo conditions. She also gained deep insight into the human-like mother-child bonds of orangutans.

But the world of orangutans has changed drastically since Galdikas started her work. The orangutan population has decreased by 80 percent in the past 20 years, with most of that in the last decade. There are only about 30,000 left, scattered in fragmented populations over a large area on the islands. The main reason is the massive deforestation in Indonesia, due to illegal logging and government-sponsored transformation of the forests into lucrative palm oil plantations. Palm oil, often called liquid gold, is used for edible oils, lubricants and cosmetic oils and is sold as futures on the stock market. If things keep going at the rate they are, Galdikas says, the orangutans' days will be numbered.

"The orangutans are on the way to being extinct in the wild," she says. "Once you destroy their forests, they're gone. Then they become crop raiders and people kill them."

As is the case with virtually every Great Ape habitat, the people of Indonesia live in dire social and economic conditions. Since the fall of the brutal dictator Suharto, the country is lurching painfully toward a supposed democratic government. Progress is slow and poverty is rampant. Illegal logging is one of the few ways people can make a living, Galdikas explains, with tropical

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hardwood from Sumatra worth \$1,000 per cubic meter by the time it reaches the shores of Indonesia and heads for China, Taiwan or other import destinations. Not surprisingly, this profit is not going to the people who do the actual logging; the average salary in Borneo is only \$100 a month.

"They log illegally and buy the flashiest motorcycles on earth, but basically they want what everybody wants—healthcare, food, shelter," says Galdikas of the illegal loggers.

Around the area known as Kumai, at least 1,000 men are participating in illegal logging. Galdikas is hoping to address this problem with a job creation program wherein these men would be paid \$100 a month to patrol the forest and do composting, recycling and other environmental preservation jobs. She hopes the \$10 million, five-year project will be funded by the US government and private organizations and individuals around the world.

Galdikas notes that the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and other international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been pressuring the Indonesian government to cut down on illegal logging, but critics of the IMF and World Bank say the policies of these institutions are in fact largely responsible for the exploitation of natural resources in Third World countries like Indonesia.

If the orangutans are lost to us forever, Galdikas notes, we will have lost a part of ourselves.

"Orangutans share 97 percent of our genetic material with us," she said. "They basically are us. They're living in the Garden of Eden we used to live in—they never left it. They give us insight into what we once were, insight you can't get from old stones."

The Bonobos in the Congo

The number of bonobos are also dropping steeply, researchers say. Living only in the dense rain forest in the central part of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa, no one has ever done a comprehensive study of the number of bonobos and their exact habitats. But scientists are certain the ongoing civil war in the area and the long process of rebuilding that will follow it are devastating the bonobos.

Bonobos are unique among primates for their peacefulness, their egalitarian societies and their use of sex for means other than reproduction. Bonobo groups are remarkably unaggressive, and males and females hold roughly equal power. They are very sexual, engaging in constant heterosexual and homosexual behavior, usually for pleasure, to ease stress or other social purposes besides reproduction. They live for 45 to 50 years and reproduce only about every nine years.

For years, the bonobos roamed the dense jungles of the Congo with little contact with the sparse human population that lived there. But since the death of dictator Mobutu and the outbreak of civil war several years ago, the jungles are occupied by thousands of people, both military forces and refugees from villages. Because of the war, the bonobos are being killed by war-related violence, new stresses and diseases brought on by the humans' presence, and as food for the people who are stuck in the jungle with little else to eat.

The term "bush meat" is used to describe the killing of bonobos and other wild jungle animals for food. Ecologists have

identified a bush meat crisis throughout many parts of Africa, as bush meat has become a popular dish with upper class elites and new guns and roads have made its harvesting easier.

Scientists who worked in the Congo before fleeing the violence say they could tell bonobos are being killed because of the number of orphans showing up in village markets.

"If you see even one orphan in the market, that means five or six adults in its family have been killed," says Gay Reinartz, a scientist from the Zoological Society of Milwaukee who worked in the Congo until fleeing the war.

Several of the major indigenous groups living in the bonobo habitat areas have taboos on eating the bonobo, since people have long respected its human-like traits and even built up an elaborate folklore around it. But researchers say these taboos are quickly breaking down as the need for food becomes more urgent and young people break away from their traditions. The military groups flooding the area also are usually from different regions, so they don't share the locals' respect for the bonobo. Guns brought into the area where previously hunting was done with nets and arrows also make it that much easier to kill bonobos and other animals. The only place bonobo hunting is banned is in Salonga National Park in the Lukuru region.

While the war is the most immediate threat to the bonobo's survival, the end of the war will bring new problems. The area is being decimated by the conflict, so when the war finally ends the country will face a massive need for economic infusions and rebuilding. The most lucrative way to do this will be through mining and logging, which will result in massive deforestation similar to what is going on in Indonesia. The US's recent push for free trade with Africa will heighten the desirability of huge logging exports, and roads built for the war will help facilitate it. Logging and mining also make the bush meat crisis even worse, because the increased accessibility to the forest provided by industrial roads gives hunters easier access to the animals.

"The last couple of years the Congo government has faced an influx of pressure from Malaysian logging companies that have already depleted their own trees," says JO Meyers Thompson, a scientist who left the Congo in June 1998 because of the war.

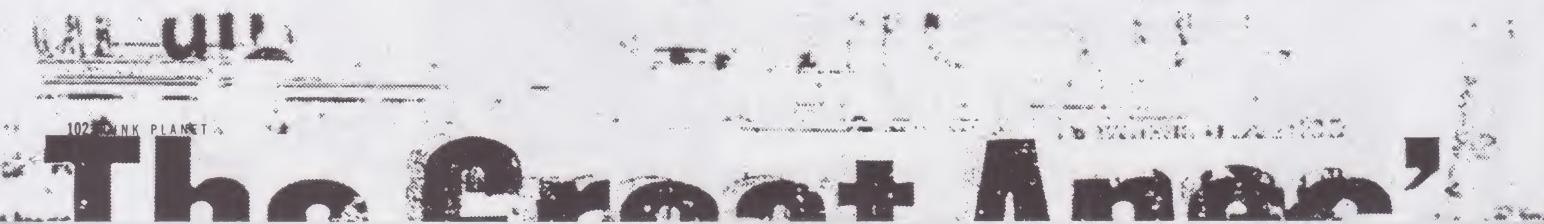
More than half the bonobos' habitats are covered by either standing permits or active concessions—places where logging companies are allowed to log.

"The country has been through 40 years of dictatorship and two civil wars," says Reinartz. "The economy is absolutely devastated. Congo has half the tropical rain forest in all of central Africa. The government doesn't have the capacity to rebuild the mining industry to what it once was, so they're looking at this forest as a major source of revenue."

Inogwabini Bila Isia, a Congolese scientist doing a fellowship at the Zoological Society of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, says the bonobos can be seen as models for the peace process in the Congo and for the future of man as a whole.

"They're peaceful, they're not male-dominated, they have a distribution of food system that is unusual in many mammals," says Bila Isia. "I think we should look at them as a flagship for the

A Congolese man killed a bonobo out of rage, "because everyone was saying it was important."



peace process."

He and Thompson note that while the Congolese government and NGOs have far more to worry about than the apes, preservation does need to come from inside the Congo instead of through the meddling of foreigners.

"What we've been seeing so far are a lot of foreigners going in and telling the Congolese what to do," says Thompson, whose former field site has been looted and bombed since she left. "That's just another form of imperialism and colonialism. If they are going to be saved it needs to come from the people in the Congo."

Reinartz and Thompson say the best way for international groups to help preserve the bonobos is through poverty relief programs and education about the bonobos. Doing any of that during the war is virtually impossible, yet still necessary.

"It's not easy to raise funds for a country in the middle of a war, but if we wait until the end, the chainsaws will already be buzzing," Reinartz says.

The Tourists and The Mountain Gorillas

There are only 640 mountain gorillas left in the world. They live only in Rwanda and parts of Uganda and the Congo. Over the years their numbers have been decimated by disease and poachers. Now the gorillas' habitat is protected by national parks, and they provide huge revenue for the areas as a tourist attraction.

In 1986, following up on a request from Fossey, the Morris Animal Foundation set up a veterinary and conservation project in which a local veterinarian and a rotating series of foreign vets work to treat seriously ill gorillas and do autopsies on dead gorillas to better ascertain any threats to their survival. In 1988-89 the program vaccinated 65 gorillas against a suspected measles outbreak, a controversial program considering many think natural cycles in the area should not be altered by humans.

One thing the program focuses on, according to program director Mike Cranfield from the Baltimore Zoo, is the health effects of eco-tourism on the gorillas. Tourists from around the world pay big money to take safaris into gorilla territory. While there are laws governing how close they can come to the gorillas and how long they can stay, Cranfield noted that tourists are always pushing for a little more and guides are eager to comply for the tips they get. Since human and gorilla DNA is so similar, gorillas are susceptible to human diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis and measles, and vice versa—humans can be infected through gorilla populations. The gorillas have built up immunities to the diseases infecting local people, but the tourists who come from all over the world bring in a host of new diseases that the gorillas are vulnerable to. The stress of constant contact with humans also wears down the gorillas' health and immune systems. The Morris vets are looking at fecal cortisol levels, which indicate levels of stress, to see if there are significantly higher levels where there are more tourists.

Despite the problems it causes, conservationists don't want to get rid of ecotourism altogether. The profit it pumps into the economy is probably the only reason the parks aren't being destroyed and used for logging and hunting. The parks' economic importance has also figured into the conflicts in the area: many

speculate the rebels who attacked a Ugandan tourist camp and executed tourists and guides did so to hurt the government's revenues from the tours. Ken Cameron, a vet in the Morris program, returned to the sight of the massacre just one week after it happened to find the tourists' belongings still scattered about and the buildings burnt to the ground.

Cameron didn't even see a gorilla for his first four months in Rwanda. His first encounter was when he was called into the Congo to treat a young female caught in a snare trap.

"We were crossing from Uganda to the Congo," he says. "It was something else. Gun battles every night, border crossings manned by 12-year-olds with automatic weapons."

Along with the actual tourists, the guides as well as veterinarians and researchers who work in the gorillas' habitat cause a health risk to the animals. Cranfield said the program aims to promote education and testing for various diseases among researchers and locals who work with the gorillas, but it is not an easy thing to do. For one thing foreigners shouldn't be coming in and demanding locals undergo medical tests.

"We can't be missionaries and tell them what to do," he says. "90 percent of the people we're talking about aren't our employees. We're hoping to set up these programs with our own people to show that this is a good thing."

The foundation is also working with the national institutes of health in the various countries to try to increase communication about outbreaks of disease in humans that could affect gorillas and vice versa.

Why Saving the Apes Matters

Since the people themselves are suffering such extreme poverty and violence in places like the Congo, Rwanda and Borneo, it is understandable that many are resentful of all the international concern about apes. Galdikas notes the story of a Congolese man who killed a bonobo out of rage, "because everyone was saying it was important."

The scientists understand their feelings, they say, but see the conservation of the Great Apes as part of a much bigger picture. The apes survival is integrally linked to the survival of the rain forests and all the other creatures that live there, including humans. Besides the symbolic abomination of letting poverty and greed lead to the destruction of our closest living relatives, the loss of great apes would alter the ecosystem and forest social system enough that countless other species would be affected.

"Obviously there are competing interests," Reinartz says of the desire for logging in the Congo. "But once that forest vanishes, there won't be anything there at all for people. There is no industry, the forest is everything."

Reinartz adds that many see the bonobos as a model for what human society could be like—more peaceful and egalitarian.

"They offer us a different look at ourselves," she says. "They raise questions like, do we have to kill each other, does it have to be a male-dominated society? We should be advocating as much for toads as for bonobos, and overall for the forest because preserving the rain forest is the most important part of preserving our planet." ©



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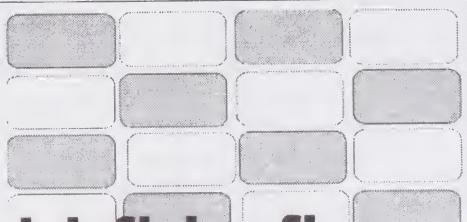
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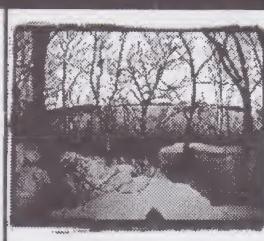
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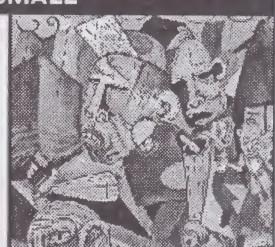


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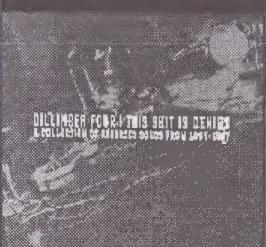
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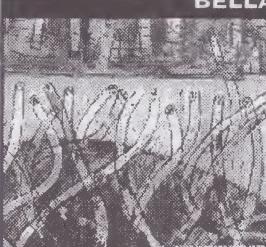
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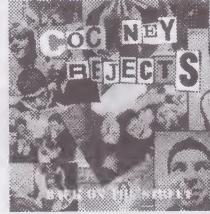
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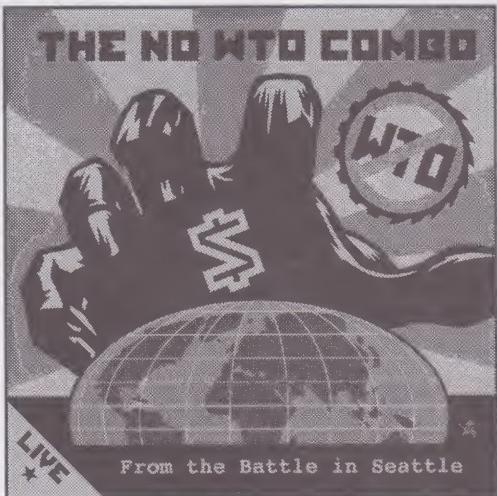
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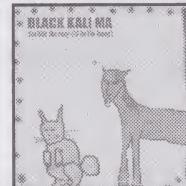


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the DIY files

Start Your Own Food Co-op!

By Jeff Guntzel and Soyun Kim

What is a Food Co-op?

A Food Co-op, or buying club is a group of people who purchase food together at wholesale prices, and share the work and expenses involved in acquiring and distributing the food. A co-op buying club is also a place for people from the same community or area to get to know one another by working together to serve their needs.

Buying clubs operate by the co-op Principles: they are member-owned, member-controlled; each member has a say in the decision-making process; and each buying club draws its own set of rules, based on the needs of the group. Even though many buying clubs call themselves "co-ops," in many states, the word "co-op" is a legally controlled term which is limited strictly to use by organizations that are incorporated as co-ops.

Even though they're popular in urban neighborhoods, food buying clubs are by no means big city only affairs. Co-ops have traditionally played an important role in rural development. A buying club serves a similar purpose by bringing high quality, natural foods and products to neighborhoods, small towns, and rural areas which might not otherwise have access to them.

Why Start a Food Buying Club?

There are many reasons to start or join a buying club:

- To obtain high quality foods.
- To save money.
- To purchase natural and organic foods at affordable prices.
- To support organic farmers.
- To learn more about food politics.

You are also working against a culture of wealth and health that eliminates high quality food as an option for those making below \$20,000 a year.

Buying clubs also support an alternative economy. Most distributors are cooperatives themselves, and order much of their stock from cooperatives of small companies and small farms. By taking our money out of chain grocery stores and mega-food giants like Nestle and Phillip-Morris (which owns Kraft, Keebler, and others), we are one step closer to toppling the whole stinkin' capitalist system! Hmmmm...

How a Buying Club Works

- Each month members make out their order from the catalogs supplied by the distributor.
 - All orders from the buying club are combined.
 - The group order is phoned, faxed, or mailed to the distributor.
- The distributor we use, Blooming Prairie, has started using a

program that allows you to place an order through your modem, making for less paperwork. The program also makes keeping track of finances much easier.

- The buying club meets a delivery truck at the delivery and distribution site and the order is paid for with a group check.
- Members divide the group order into individual orders.
- Members pay for their orders and take their food home.
- Any final internal bookkeeping is completed.
- The distributor is contacted in any problems or complaints arise.

Finding a distributor

First, you will need to find a wholesale distributor that can deliver to you. We go through Blooming Prairie, a cooperative that services most of the Midwest. For a list of Cooperative Food Distributors in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, visit: <http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/links/foodlinks.html>.

For those of you without access to the web, a few distributors you could contact are:

In the Midwest:

Blooming Prairie Natural Foods, Inc.
Phone: 612-378-9774 Fax 612-378-99780
Serves IA, IL, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, WI

In the Midwest/Midsouth:

Federation of Ohio River Cooperatives
Phone: 614-861-2446
Serves IN, KY, MD, MI, NC, OH, PA, SC, VA, WV

In the West:

Tucson Cooperative Warehouse
Phone: 602/884-9951
Serves AZ, southern CA, CO, NM, NV, TX, UT

On the West Coast:

North Coast Cooperative
Phone: 707-826-8669 Fax: 707-826-8666
Serves northern CA

In the South:

Ozark Co-op Warehouse
Phone: 501/521-4920
Serves AL, AR, FL, GA, KS, LA, MO, MS, OK, TN, TX

On the East Coast:

Northeast Cooperatives, Inc.
Phone: 1-800-334-9939
Serves CT, DC, MA, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT

Finding Members

Hold a meeting! Invite all of those people who are interested in the buying club idea. At the meeting, emphasize the *cooperative nature* of a buying club. Sharing the work fairly is the key to a successful buying club. Best to divide up work like accounting, collecting orders each month, placing the order, collecting checks, communicating with the distributor, and unloading and sorting the food at delivery. A buying club is a lot of work in the beginning—keep this in mind when looking for people to join! We suggest starting out with a core group of people who you trust to work effectively and fairly and make that group the nucleus of the buying club. Once you have settled into a routine with that group, taking on new members should be a breeze.

When looking for potential members, remember that there will probably be a minimum purchase of several hundred dollars (\$750 at Blooming Prairie). Find out the minimum each member would be willing to spend each month and base the size of your group on how many people it would take to meet the minimum order each month. We recommend 7-10 members, a good number that doesn't get too unwieldy, and pretty much guarantees that you'll make your minimum.

Also, orders will most likely be placed and delivered monthly, so a time commitment is necessary from each member.

Members should also be willing to put some financial investment into the cooperative process (we add a small percentage to each order). Of course, in return, each member would get her or his share of the profit that the cooperative makes.

Picking a Delivery Sight

Once you have established a buying club, you will need to pick a delivery and distribution site that will be available each month. Our group uses a member's garage. Some clubs use community centers or churches. Your delivery site must be semi-truck accessible.

Thinking Bulk

While you can buy individual items from the wholesale distributor, many items can only be ordered in bulk. This means that instead of buying a bottle of juice, you will have to order a case of 6 bottles. Instead of buying one bag of chips, you will have to order a box of 12 bags. This requires a little extra storage space and it will cost more up front, but you are saving money and time in the long run. Of course, you can also split bulk orders with other members, this is a way of saving the most amount of money and opening up your ordering options. In addition, often times buying bulk means less packaging which means less stress on the environment.

Not Just Food

Wholesale distributors have much more to offer than just food. Blooming Prairie offers a dizzying selection of personal care items, house cleaning supplies, pet-care supplies, bed sheets,

and clothing as well as natural medicine and supplements. And the non-food items are usually the biggest bargains, often as much as 50% cheaper than in the stores.

What a Deal!

To show you just how much money you can save in a food buying club, we have done a little comparison shopping for you. Check it out:

	"Whole Foods" Price	Wholesale Price	Your Savings!
Cape Cod Potato Chips	\$1.79 / bag	\$1.22 / bag	.57
Garden of Eatin' Organic Tortilla Chips	\$3.49 / bag	\$2.69 / bag	.80
Pepper Jack Soy Cheese	\$4.29 / pack	\$3.06 / pack	1.23
Maggie's Organic Cotton / Hemp socks	\$7.09 / pair	\$3.62 / pair	3.47

In the case of Blooming Prairie, there are also monthly sales. Often times, we order just from the sale catalog at discounts ranging from 15-30% of the wholesale price! Damn!

More than meals.

Your buying club can be about much more than just buying or shopping for things. Your club can decide to have a common purpose. For example: a percentage of your savings can go towards a project or cause; your club could create a forum or discussion session to share ideas about creative living; or you could organize your buying club members to become full blown green activists!

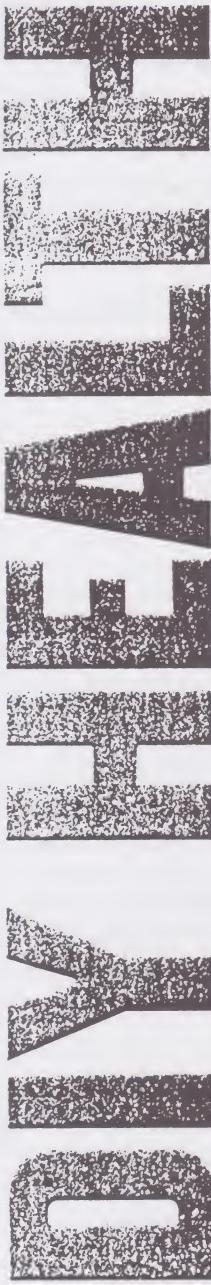
Give it some thought

All of this may seem like a bit much, but give it some thought. Starting a food buying club really is a revolutionary action. You are encouraging cooperative action, withdrawing your hard earned money from evil corporations and chain stores, supporting organic farmers and other cooperatives, taking a little load off of the earth by purchasing pesticide-free foods with less packaging marketed by socially responsible and environmentally conscious companies, and saving money!

It takes a bit of work to get it started and keep it going, but with a real cooperative effort, you will get into a routine that puts a minimum strain on each member. Think of the hours you spend driving or riding to the grocery store, looking around, and waiting in line, wouldn't that time be much better spent hanging out with friends and building an independent cooperative community? ☺

If you want to know more, please contact us at planethands@earthlink.net.
Some of this information was taken from Blooming Prairie literature. Thanks.

in sickness and no wealt



Did you know?

1. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency did a study that shows that chlorine *does* cause cancer in human beings. Minimal quantities damage both the immune and reproductive systems. Nearly ALL major brand tampons and pads contain synthetic fibers (rayon being the most significant), and go through a chlorine bleaching process. The chemical bleaching produces toxic by-products such as Dioxin, Furan and Tetrachlorobenzodioxin, which are known to cause a range of health-related problems, including birth defects, headaches, and cancer.
2. Rayon, the synthetic fiber found in commercial tampons, creates the ideal environment for the growth of the *staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, which causes toxic shock syndrome, (TSS).
3. On average 25% of women contract TSS per year, which means that 6,120 women will contract TSS, and that 367 will die each year. The women who survive TSS may suffer from miscarriages, loss of hair, loss of limbs, cancer, and/or paralysis.
4. Epidemic problems from Dioxin exposure occur in over thirteen species of fish and wildlife in the Great Lakes, including infertility and birth defects. Babies born to mothers in the Great Lakes region who ate two meals of Great Lake fish per month were born prematurely, weighed less, and had smaller heads than infants whose mothers did not eat the fish.
5. In a woman's lifetime, she will use between 10,000-15,000 menstrual products, about 5 tampons a day, 5 days a month for approximately 38 menstruating years. That's 11,400 tampons in a lifetime! That is a large amount of waste for just one woman!
6. Annually women in North America dispose of 20 billion tampons, 12 billion disposable pads, and the accompanying

packaging. This waste also includes the synthetic fiber, Rayon, pesticides associated with cotton cultivation, plastics of packaging and applicators, and Dioxin

7. The average consumer can figure she is handing over at least \$2,137 dollars in her menstruating lifetime to large corporations who endanger millions of women's lives everyday. Do you want to support them?
8. Disposable pads, although safer than tampons, are also bleached and can present the risk of carcinogenic Dioxin exposure. Rayon from the pads can also be absorbed.
9. Tampon applicators can scratch the vaginal walls and cause arterial lacerations. These cuts form a point of entry for rayon fibers and bacteria including *staphylococcus aureus*, (the bacteria that causes TSS).
10. Tampons absorb 90% of the vagina's natural secretions. Think about it...you are placing one of the most deadly substances ever produced next to the most absorbent part of your body. Not only are you subjecting yourself to a deadly carcinogen, but it's also sucking you dry! That's pretty damn scary!
11. Plastic applicators have caused serious damage to water treatment plants and beaches. The applicators have even choked wildlife!

There are Alternatives

I have provided a list of companies that offer safe and/or alternative menstrual products. I have personally used all of these and highly recommend them all.

Reusable, washable cotton menstrual pads

Luna Pads: Call toll free, 1-800-680-9739. The price for one pad in the U.S. is \$7.99, and in Canada it is \$11.99. This company takes Visa/MasterCard/Money Orders/Personal checks

Many Moons: Call toll free, 1-800-916-4444. Or order from Box 59, 15-1594 Fairfield Road, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8S 1G0. E-mail at manymoons@pacificcoast.net. If you find their web site, they have step by step instructions on how to make your own menstrual pads.

Prices:

	U.S.	Canada
Single pad-pastel	6.95	7.95
Single pad-organic	7.95	8.95
4 pack-pastel	22.95	24.95
4 pack-organic	27.95	29.95
8 pack-pastel	39.55	44.95
8 pack-organic	49.95	54.95

PLEASE NOTE: I am not a Doctor or Licensed Herbalist, so please use the recipes, advice and other information here at your own risk. If you are nursing or pregnant, do not use any herbs or supplements without supervision from your midwife, herbalist or doctor.

A Cleaner, Safer Period.

by Angel Page

Glad Rags: Call toll free, 1-800-799-4523 or order from Keepers! Inc., PO BOX 12648, Portland, OR. 97212. Not only does this company carry great pads, but they also carry tons of other great products. Call to request a catalogue or look up their website if you have access to the Internet.

Prices:

Single pad-color	\$ 8.00
Single pad-organic	\$ 9.00
3 pack-color	\$ 22.50
3 pack-organic	\$ 26.00

Tree of Knowledge and Makoto Recordings carry pads also:

Tree of Knowledge, PO BOX 251766, Little Rock, AR. 72225
Makoto Recordings, PO BOX 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005

Prices:

Single pad	\$5.00
5 pads	\$20.00

All cotton tampons, without the use of pesticides, and bleaching

Terra Femme Tampons: Write them at: Bio Business International Inc., 78 Hallam Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M6H 1W8. Phone: 1-416-539-8548 E-mail: hoffice@biobiz.com

Natracare Tampons: This product is found in many health food stores. That's your best bet at getting these, because the company only sells by the caseload and a minimum of \$100. However, there is a company that sells Natracare on their website, and a price range between \$4.50-7.00. You can call them toll free: 1-800-517-9020

Organic Essentials: You can usually find this product at your local health food store, but if you can't, you may order it from the Glad Rags Company (mentioned earlier in article).

Their prices:

Regular 10 per box	\$3.95
Regular 20 per box	\$7.90
Super 10 per box	\$3.95
Super 20 per box	\$7.90

Organic Essentials 822 Baldridge Street, O'Donnell, TX 79351. Or call them at Toll free number: 1-800-765-6491

The Keeper

The Keeper is a small internally worn, natural rubber menstrual cap. One will last you up to 10 years, made without the use of chlorine, absorbency gels, glues, scents, fibers, metals and other ingredients found in most major brand tampons.

Call toll-free: 1-800-680-9739

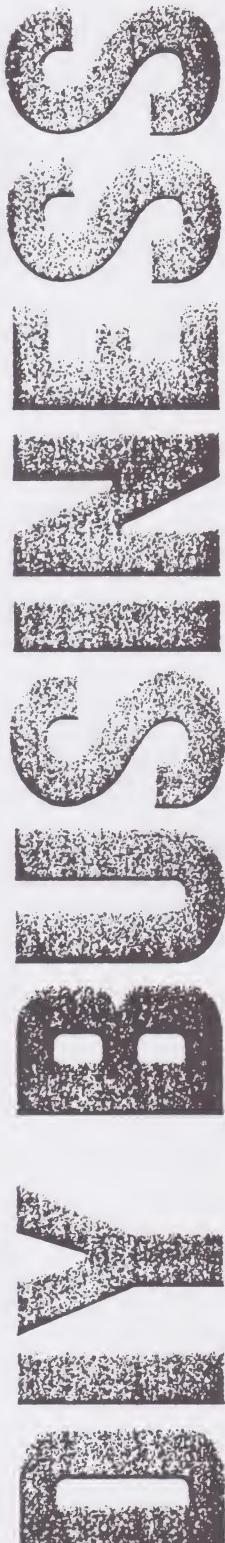
Prices: US \$33.00 Canada \$49.95 ☺

Please feel free to write me with any questions or concerns: Angel Page c/o Makoto Recordings PO Box 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005 or via e-mail at: angelpage@hotmail.com

fuck work

Sticking It To The Man with Diesel Fuel Prints

by James Squeaky



While running Unamerican for almost three years and continuing on with my current project, <http://mister-ridiculous.com>, I've enlisted the help again and again of a man named Andy to create the stickers and t-shirts to promote the projects. Andy works out of a cool warehouse space in wine country—Sonoma County. Since meeting him three years ago, we've become friends and even had Thanksgiving dinner together last year. I decided to interrogate him about his business for *Punk Planet*, enjoy.

When/why did you start Diesel Fuel Prints?

Back in 1991, I couldn't get a job to save my life. I knew how to screen print, and I figured that I'd better start making some money with that or I would be out of a place to live. I figured that if I had my own specialized printing business, I could also use it as an opportunity to teach other people a trade that they could always fall back on, even if I couldn't afford to maintain them as an employee. So, for the most part, we've hired people with no screen printing experience so that they won't have to be in the same situation I was in. A good trade skill is hard to come by these days.

What are/were the biggest challenges with starting, maintaining, and building up Diesel Fuel?

That's easy and obvious: Money! I had none of it. Here I was, a college dropout with bad credit trying to convince a bank to lend me some dough to start a business printing stickers for independent bands—you might say "they laughed me all the way out of the bank." So, I went the alternate DIY route. I built my own press and moved into a small garage that was \$100 a month rent and I grew as I could from there. ¶ Since then, my biggest barrier has been buying new or used equipment to keep up with our production. Since I don't have any financial backing or credit, I am forced to buy all my equipment with

cash up front, and as you can imagine, saving \$13,000 cash for a new press is not the easiest task in the world.

My understanding is that Diesel Fuel is a "legit" business, meaning that you pay taxes and such. It seems that with a business like Diesel Fuel, it would be far more lucrative to just ask your clients for cash and pay your employees under the table. So, why did you make the decision to go the legal route? What are the benefits of being a "legit" business?

Really, the only reason to "go legit" in any business like this is simply because it would put me and my employees in jeopardy of losing our jobs and having to pay back taxes on what we've earned, etc. Enough money goes in and out of here, that eventually the IRS would catch up with us. I wish I didn't have to be above the board, as it definitely cuts into our profits, but going to jail for tax evasion would truly suck and just isn't worth it.

When did you hire someone to start working with you? How many people are involved now? How do you compensate them for their work and keep it fun and interesting for them? What are their tasks?

I first hired someone about two years ago. Now there is basically four people working here anywhere from 12 to 40 hours a week (in addition to me). I am very lucky to have a crew that cares about Diesel Fuel as much as I do, and they are willing to do whatever needs to get done, whether it be printing, shipping or sweeping. For their hard work, I try to compensate as much as I can get away with—they all make at least 25% more than what the industry standard pay rate is, they get a yearly bonus (which can be pretty damn good depending on how we did that year) and they get some kind of paid vacation. I also let them use the shop for their own printing needs whenever they want, which works out well because two of them are in bands and one is an artist. ¶ My philosophy is basically that if I treat my employees how I'd want to be treated if it were the other way around, then they'll be excited to continue to do a great job for Diesel Fuel. They work really hard and I feel they should be well compensated and taken care of.

I am somewhat perplexed about why businesses tend to work the way they do in the punk rock world. There is such a strong "anti-capitalist" sentiment in the punk scene, yet when it comes down to it, most of the successful punk businesses (save AK Press, Mordam, Rainbow Grocery, etc) use this same model and thrive. So, why do you think this is? Why have you chosen to not arrange Diesel Fuel as a cooperatively owned print shop amongst your employees?

I really think there is a huge difference between your average punk rock capitalist and a multi-mega corporation. The main difference being what they value as the bottom line in the company. Most of the punk business owners realize that there is much more important goals in running a business than the bottom line profit, such as creating something cool, beautiful, thoughtful and

meaningful. Also, things like giving back to the community and keeping its employees/partners/friends/bands (if a label or distributor) happy. Really, why would anyone want to work with a company that doesn't care about anything but the bottom line? ¶ As far as making Diesel Fuel a co-op, the main reason it would probably not happen is that I feel the responsibility of the business should lay in the hands of only one or a few people. That way, if we ever did get in a financial mess or what not, we wouldn't all go down. Also, I have people who come and go; trying to incorporate them into the business as an equal partner just seems way more challenging than it could possibly be worth. ¶ On the other hand, I do extend a lot of say to my employees about what happens around the shop. If I'm thinking of buying new equipment or making a change, I ask for their opinion since they have to live and work with those changes as well.

With running any business, even if it is your passion, there is always going to be a lot of "shit work" involved—keeping up the books, contacting customers, etc. How do you balance your time and how much of it is spent on getting these less pleasant tasks completed? How do you keep it interesting for your employees and yourself?

I don't really keep track of how much time I spend a week doing any specific thing—it's always so chaotic and I just hope that I can get everything done as quickly as possible. Lately, it seems that my time has been fairly evenly split between talking to customers, doing layouts, and managing other shit around the shop.

Keeping the business interesting for me and my employees can be pretty tough sometimes. We all work really hard and let's just say that the employee "lounge" is always well stocked and I try to keep my employees schedules as flexible as they need to be. Everyone has a lot of say in what goes on around here and we trudge through the shit work with a minimum of complaining.

I imagine that printing stickers and t-shirts all day, every day, must get a little old. What do you enjoy about printing? Is there anything that you'd really like to do that you haven't yet, such as print on staplers or something? Are there any ways that you would like to expand your business?

Yeah, sometimes just printing stickers and t-shirts gets a little tedious, so I'm always interested in trying out stuff that I've never done before. Happily, I've been meeting a lot of really cool people around the country who have wanted to experiment a little with printing on different things and use some different styles. So, lately we've been trying to move into some new areas of printing, such as can coolers, posters, magnetics, etc. Anything new to keep things fresh and challenging keeps us interested. Recently someone asked us to do scratch and sniff stickers! ¶ We're also hoping to have our web site up soon (<http://www.dieselfuelprints.com>), which will make it easier to place on-line orders, as well as answer questions

about printing and other fun stuff. This will be a huge weight off our shoulders as answering the same questions twenty times a day gets a little old and distracts us from getting more done.

Do you feel that Diesel Fuel, as a business, is successful at this point? How were you able to reach this point and how do you measure success?

1) I reached a very proud landmark this last December when I finally reached the point where I could afford to move my living space out of the shop! ¶ 2) I'm at the point now where I have enough steady business, that I no longer have to worry about how I'm going to come up with the next month's rent. ¶ 3) There are four of us living off Diesel Fuel Prints instead of some lame ass corporate job with shitty pay. ¶ So, hell yes I consider Diesel Fuel a success! I've really worked my ass off to get to this point and have basically put every bit of energy and money that I've made back into the company and I can only see growth from here.

It seems that there is at least one other strong sticker printer in the punk rock world (stickerguy), how do you view competition? Do you think that there is room for both yours and his business to comfortably co-exist? How do you answer questions like "Why should I use Diesel Fuel instead of stickerguy?"

If you think about it this way: Look at how many independent bands, labels, zines and countless other projects there are out there just in the punk rock community! I'd venture to guess that there are at least a million different projects, big and small, and all of them seem to want stickers made promoting themselves. Everyone loves stickers and they take almost no design skills to lay out and are cheap as hell to make. So, no, I'm not too worried about other printing sources infringing on my business.

Stickerguy Pete and I have a friendly rapport and honestly, it keeps us both in check as we have to make sure that we are offering fair prices, quick turn around times and monitor our scale of "user friendly" ordering and such. Stickerguy is excellent at what he does and so am I- So I think I can speak confidently for both of us that neither feels threatened by the other. I'm very honest with people when they are considering getting stickers or t-shirts printed. I encourage them to check out stickerguy too and then they are free to choose whose business they'd like to support. I figure the friendly competition can only make my product better.

You were once describing to me a really great idea you had for starting a "scholarship program" through Diesel Fuel. What is that all about?

Our scholarship program basically is my way of giving a hand to people or organizations in a situation like I was in several years ago: They are trying to get something stated and don't have much money and need something printed. We give somewhere between 5 and 16 different non-profit organizations, artists, new business owners, etc. a chance to get some free stickers. We will

run a 250 sheet run of 1-color stickers and divide the sheet amongst these groups. All people have to do is call or email us and tell us why they need printing for free and we'll decide whether to do it or not.

It seems that so many punk businesses have to make little compromises in order to keep themselves in business. AK Press makes most of their money from selling their "sex" and "drug" books to allow them to keep printing good anarchist material that they really care about, but that doesn't sell as well. With Unamerican, I was expected to sell many slogans that I thought were insipid in order to continue to inject a few that I thought were meaningful, but didn't sell as well as something like "You're all sheep." Labels like Epitaph have to crank out bands like Pennywise in order to slip in something like Refused or a Noam Chomsky spoken word CD to a mainstream audience, etc. etc. etc. So, what sort of standards do you set for what you'll print? Do you have a policy, such as you won't print anything hateful or connected to political ideologies that you find intolerable, etc.? Such as, would you print up some hardcore Christian Rock band's stickers or a band that you knew was openly racist, homophobic, etc? How would you approach it if it came up?

What's really great about the production business, is that it's actually a position of a great deal of opportunity to stand your ground and I haven't had to make any compromises that I can think of. I guess on a similar note to your statement, back when I was peddling my own slogans, MEAN PEOPLE SUCK made it possible for me to put out other more political statements right next to the more popular sticker. ¶ Now, basically, our philosophy is that the more paid work we run, the more we can donate to non-profits, give out scholarships, etc. As far as what we will and will not print, it's as simple as "We won't print anything that offends me." We will flatly refuse any work that is racist or homophobic; I really don't care how big the job is, it's simply not worth compromising my morals or making my employees feel uncomfortable. ¶ Actually, we've been pretty lucky with our clientele, but recently we did a job for a guy who makes custom motorcycles. The fact that he had a fairly violent reputation and was involved with a notoriously rabid motorcycle gang didn't bother us too much. But, after accepting the job and working with him for a week or so on the art, I found out he was a Nazi, which of course, immediately put him at the very top of my shit list, and we took almost two months to complete his order. I figured this was a much safer way to get rid of him without getting my shop firebombed for being Jewish and having a black employee. After he sent his Aryan-looking girlfriend to pick up the film work, we haven't heard from him since.

How do you inject your own political ideas into what you are doing?

Sadly, I've been so busy lately that I just haven't really been able to bring many of my own ideas into production. I am planning on starting to print my own sayings again soon and I'll probably just give those stickers away for free or really cheap. The point of them would just be to give people something to tag their towns with something good to say.

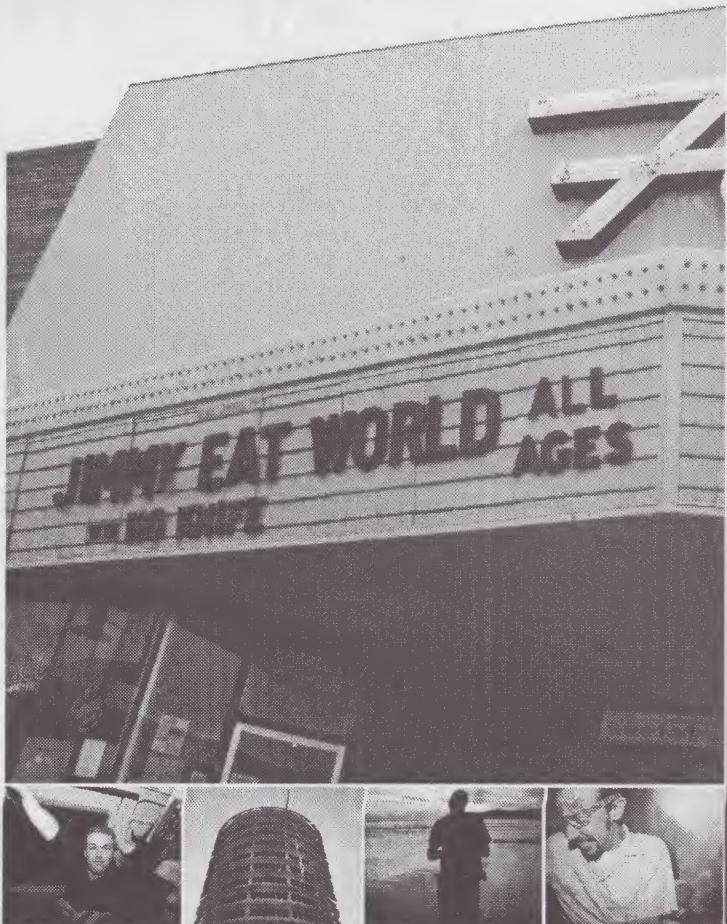
How do you justify the fact that what you are creating is in many ways contributing to harming the environment (the vinyl not being recyclable and the backs only purpose is to be thrown away)? Are there barriers (cost, availability, lower quality printing??) in using environmentally friendly printing materials?

OK, here's the deal: unfortunately, with any kind of printing, especially in bulk runs, there is an aspect that will be harmful to the environment; it seems impossible to totally avoid. However, we are always looking for ways to do less harm and are always willing to check out new types of inks. Right now, about 80% of all the chemicals we use are either citrus based or biodegradable. We've tried out some other, more eco-friendly products, and we've run into a barrier with how well they work—such as, the citrus based cleaners, which are one of the more eco-friendly, only work well with t-shirt inks. Recently, we have found a biodegradable solvent for our sticker inks. Also, since we do a lot of shipping, we always save the packaging our supplies come in from our vendors and reuse it to ship out our packages.

What is the story behind your MEAN PEOPLE SUCK sticker? Did you really sell enough of those stickers that you were able to make a living off of it?

In a nutshell, back in 1991 I had a roommate who had been fired from his job at the college paper that he was editor of for the third time. He was pissed and he put a poster on our living room wall that he had created saying "MEAN PEOPLE SUCK." I saw this and some sort of inspiration clicked on and I said "Damn, I'm sick of eating top ramen, I think I'm going to print up some stickers that say MEAN PEOPLE SUCK and hopefully make a little money." A few months after I started making and selling the stickers locally, my friend was kind enough to clue me in that there was a NOFX song called "Mean People Suck." Doh! Luckily, the band didn't seem to mind me sharing the slogan and I continued to sell them until about 1996. I never actually made it rich off that phrase, that's just a rumor. I was however, able to afford to live in a garage without having another job (except a few hours a week in my friend's smoke shop), so I guess to a under-educated punk rocker, you could call that "rich." ☺

Feel free to get in touch James@misterridiculous.com



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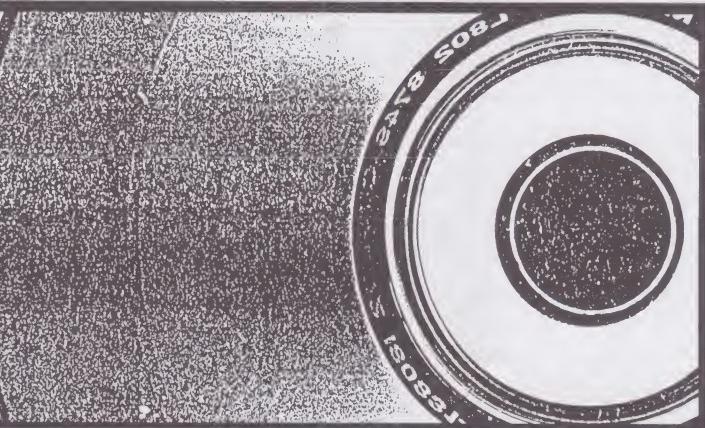
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ANODYNE – QUIET WARS, CD

Anodyne is a band that knows how to belt their listeners right in the eardrum on the first listen to this release. This is powerful, enraging, brutal, and a whole bunch of other adjectives describing a horrifying and insane time. One may believe this could be the ultimate soundtrack for someone with road rage. Any one who digs the whole heavy HC sound that's borderline metal, this would be the release to check out. Their energy seems endless while they continue to dish out this musical beating. These seven selections are not enough to satisfy anyone. Quiet Wars just makes me want to listen to this CD again. The packaging is real cool too even though I've seen the Dante's Inferno Illustrations before on other stuff. However the demon cutout on the booklet opening makes it really rad. So if you dig the whole Hydra Head Records thing or earlier Deadguy, this is worth looking into. But this one is definitely my brutal choice selection for this issue. (DM)

THE AUTOMATICS – MURDER SUICIDE, CD

So one night (I'm going to start all my reviews with "so") I was waiting for the bus at like 2:30 in the morning. It was a week day night, just an ordinary night. I was pretty tired and loopy from showing my friends around the city all day. Any ways, ordinary night, I'm tired, waiting for the bus by myself in the middle of the night. This sounds like a horror story beginning. The streets are pretty deserted and there are a bunch of Mexican dudes waiting for the bus as well. All of a sudden, I hear the bass from a car in the distance. About 20 feet in front of where I'm standing,



an Indian guy with a turban (a Hindude) pulls up to the stoplight in a brand new, red convertible of some kind. He's bumping Indian music super loud and just nodding his head waiting for the light to change. Then he looks over at me and I can barely contain myself. I give him a smile and a head nod, the light turns green and he zooms off, and leaves behind the faint screeching of Indian women's voices. It was one of the funniest things I've ever seen and I wish I could explain it better. But I can explain this Automatics CD. A little. I had recognized this band from Mutant Pop and compilations, so I had them figured for plain old pop punk, but this is actually pretty catchy garage punk. These guys could probably whip an older crowd of garage enthusiasts into a frenzy, but they probably end up playing to apathetic pop punk kids. Think the Angry Samoans with the drummer from Sinkhole singing. Then think about the Indian guy. (NS)

BANGS – SWEET REVENGE, CD

From the 47 second opener, "Fast Easy Love" to the last track covering Cheap Trick's, "Southern Girls", I am surely impressed. To have the intelligence to hit you over the head with an under minute anthem reminded me of great bands like the Minutemen or Bikini Kill (they sound similar). I haven't been real up on my Kill Rock Stars releases cause they don't send them our way too often, but if this is any outlook, order me the last 20 releases pronto. Yes, this three piece from Olympia, WA have two girls and one guy and trade vocals all around, harmonizing and such. Its great, it moves so fast you will listen to this a few times through upon first taste. This guitar driven

90 DAY MEN/GoGoGoAirheart, SPLIT CD EP

In the three 90 Day Men songs, it seems like the guitar and rhythm section don't have much to do with one another. While the bass and drums play their parts together, the reverb-saturated guitar does whatever it wants. The first and third songs are more upbeat and post-punk sounding; the second is slow, instrumental, and trance-like. GoGoGoAirheart sing like Brits and record themselves so that we can't even hear the bass drum, assuming there is one. The music is a mix of punk and garage, but there is entirely too much treble. (BJM)
Box Factory PO Box 477866, Chicago IL 60647

ABSENCE – LOST IN THE MASSES, CD

There definitely is an absence of coherence in this scatter-brained release. On this release, you get a weird combination of gutteral vocals, funk, hardcore, punk, and rap. This melting pot of music might work for some bands,

but it's a deadly combination that amateurs should not be messing around with. (RE)

Union Maid Amalgamated 710 Oaks St, Flint, MI 48503

ACROBAT DOWN – CONSCIOUS PILOT, CD

Melodic pop-punk influenced indie rock with lots of references to water and airplanes. The kids call it "emo" but I would disagree. Too many cliches and bad layout bogs this release down. (RE)

Delmar Records, PO Box 5461 Richmond, VA 23220

*** ANODYNE – QUIET WARS, CD**

See review above.

Escape Artist Records, PO Box 472 Downingtown, PA 19335-0472

ANOTHER REASON – TAKE CONTROL, CD

This band plays straight edge hardcore from Sweden. This breaks no ground lyrically or musically, resulting in

yet another sXe release that will probably fall through the cracks. (RE)

Crucial Response, Kaiserfield 98, 46047, Oberhausen, Germany

A.P.P.L.E. – ALL PUNKS PLEASE LEAVE EARTH, CD

This is a live documentation of the New York female fronted political band, APPLE from 1987. The quality lacks in some areas but if you dig the band this is a must have. Otherwise check out APPLE's impressive studio stuff. (DM)

Broken Rekids, PO Box 460402 SF, CA 94146

AUGUST-S/T CD

Pretty, cute, sweet sounding pop made for the radio and sorority girls. Unoriginal bullshit. The name is Punk Planet not Top 40 Planet, you fucks. (MY)

No Address August (415) 776-7414

About our new review section: We still review all the records we receive, but we only give longform reviews to records our review staff decides they want to highlight. That doesn't mean the ones that get short reviews aren't worthy, just that the reviewer decided that they could write about another record better. Also, we now give each reviewer a "spotlight" section, where they can write about an old album they really liked and write about what they're currently listening to. Finally, If a reviewer doesn't like it, you don't. It's not institutional policy that your record is good or that it's bad, it's just one reviewer's opinion—so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project, and that alone is certainly worth some congratulations! But please, if you're pissed at a review, remember: it's not Punk Planet, it's just one reviewer.

rock has anthems galore: "Sweet Revenge" and "Into You" being highlights. I have been hit by a ton of bricks with a note attached saying, "We are the Bangs and we will rock your world!". An early vote for best (non re-release) LP of the year. One can hope that their debut LP is just as good I just ordered today. (EA)

THE BLACKS - SHATTERED, 7 INCH

I have heard a good buzz about the Blacks for some time now. This limited edition tour 7-inch made it my way via my Punk Planet things to review pile. Plopping it in, from the first note I could tell that these three boys from America could play some fine rock and roll. The key to rock and roll is not in the instruments or production. Or even in the style for that matter. It is in the attitude of the band. And if you have lots of rock attitude it will come across in your music. This is probably the main reason all that emo stuff never appealed much to me. It is an attitude-less form of music. And we all know the best punks have always had a strong attitude. The art of playing ugly and sexy rock is hard to master. Kind of like the yin and yang of music. The blacks seem to have it. The Matrix of all that sounds good and groovy. Otis Redding had more soul than all of these new boy band/ teen-boobie girl stars of today put together. And all good punk and rock seem to steal a little of that soul attitude. And you don't call yourself slick black unless you gots the attitudes. You don't call you band The Blacks unless you gots it. And you don't put out a rocking tour edition 7 inch unless you gots it either. Amen! (BC)

BONECRUSHER - SINGLES COLLECTION, CD

I can't believe I didn't pay this band any attention until this showed up in my box. Bonecrusher is a seriously inspired streetpunk band that deserves to be checked out. The gruff vocals (sung by despondent vocalist Raybo) express levels of pain and anger too extreme to be just another attempt to cash in on youthful rage. There's a heartfelt quality to Raybo's voice that makes this collection compelling as fuck. The lyrics are about choosing one's battles and not being a macho prick. This CD compiles FIVE full 7"s, and there's not a dud track. My favorites are the anti-religious "Hell, I've Already Been There" (best lyric: "I bet you wish that I was dead - lying in the gutter with a price on my head - don't tell me you love me when you really don't care - spreading your lies nearly everywhere") and "Problems in the Nation." Don't let the name fool you— Bonecrusher's not your average Oi-influenced band.

Bands with tunes this powerful are few and far between. I wish I'd heard 'em sooner. It's bands like this one that remind me why I got into punk in the first place. (AE)

CURSIVE - DOMESTICA, CD

It was sad last year to hear that Cursive had broken up. There were few Indie Rock bands putting out albums that I was enjoying. The Storms Of Early Summer album had slowly worked its ways into my head and I couldn't get enough of it. The 7"s they had released were sometimes lo-fi yet always catchy and emotionally energized. Then they broke up. My fucking luck. Good thing is that times change, breakups are temporary and Cursive now rock again. On Domestica, guitarist and vocalist Tim Kasher is joined by a new guitarist, yet none of the intensity from the past is lost. The rhythm section is tight and provides the fuel for the Cursive explosion. The two guitars play out combinations of notes that you might have not heard before and progressions that might not have been used a hundred times. Innovative songwriting indeed. I have to say that Domestica did not grab me at the first listen. The recording is cleaner and the vocals are more up front. I wish the guitars were louder. Yet after a few listens, just like Storms of Early Summer, Domestica has worked its way into my head. Older fans of Cursive will not be disappointed. (SY)

DIANOCAH - BATTLE CHAMPIONS, CD

Have you ever been driving or been on the bus and listening to something and said, "This is good driving music." Well, this is just such the thing for those occasion. This is calm and soothing while still being interesting and upbeat music that just sets the mood. Nice sunny day on the highway with the windows down type of music. I'm sure there's ways of describing this better like the two bassists work quite well together and the music could be emotionally charged or this is a damn good (mostly) instrumental group. But you know what, I won't. It's from Chicago and it's melodic and it's good stuff. 'Nuff said. (DM)

DROWNINGMAN - HOW THEY LIGHT CIGARETTES IN PRISON, CD

There is a club in Pittsburgh called the Millvale Industrial Theatre. It's run by this guy named Manny, and he always gave me the creeps, but that's another story. The Millvale is this creepy old warehouse that's always totally freezing in the winter and, from what I've heard, totally fucking hot in the summer. In the winter they bring in this huge heater that looks like a rocket engine. It basically shoots a steady heat wave

* THE AUTOMATICS - MURDER SUICIDE, CD

See review above. (NS)
Just Add Water, P.O. Box 420661, San Francisco, CA 94142

* BANGS - SWEET REVENGE, CD

See review above. (EA)
Kill Rock Stars 120 NE State Ave. #418, Olympia, WA 98501

BELVEDERE - ANGELS LIVE IN MY TOWN, CD

Belvedere play So-Cal punk similar to Strung-Out but with harder influences occasionally. (RE)
NO ADDRESS

BIG BUBBA - AMERICAN TREND, CD

This is a collection of fast, gritty punk/ thrash circa 1990. What lacks in ability and recording quality is made up for in enthusiasm. These guys could be something in a couple of years... maybe. (DM)

Smart Ass \PO Box 71 Cottage Grove, MN 55016

* THE BLACKS - SHATTERED, 7 INCH

See review above.
Big Neck Records P.O. Box 8144 Reston, VA 20195

BLIND SOCIETY - OUR FUTURE'S LOOKING BLEAK, CD

Punk music in that "spiky-haired, drunk-punk" vein, drawing on the sound of bands from the early 80s, such as the Exploited. The production features a really heavily distorted guitar sound. Interestingly, they have two lead vocalists, neither of which plays another instrument. (BJM)
Outsider PO Box 92708, Long Beach CA 90809

BLOOD BEAT - COMP, 7"

Four bands, punk rock. PCP Roadblock = lo-fi, raw punk. The Clancy Six = screamy, fast punk like Charles Bronson. Charm City Suicides = lo-fi, repetitive punk. Kojak = even more punk. This comp is awesome only because it all sounds like it was recorded on a boom-box and reminds me of high-school bands. I have to like it. (RE)
Blood Beat Records, 28 Piney Hill Road, Airville, PA 17302

* BONECRUSHER - SINGLES COLLECTION, CD

See review above. (AE)
Outsider, PO Box 92708, Long Beach, CA 90809

BRACKET - WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS, CD

Fat Wreck Chords puts out a lot of average pop punk bands, and Bracket are one of those bands. Don't get me wrong, they seem good at what they do, it's fun, catchy stuff, and it's nicely packaged. My little brother, without prompting, said the guy's voice sounds a lot like the guy's from MXPX, and he's right. (ES)
Fat P.O. Box 193690 San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

BRAZEN - AS FLOODS DECREASE, 10"

Upon seeing that this record was only a one time pressing of 500, I figured it was either a live recording or it was something set to be sought after. Brazen are from Switzerland and write diverse tunes in the teachings of Shotmaker. It's a keeper. (SY)
Brazen, 8 BLD, James-Fazy, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland

THE BUSHMEN - WATCHING NEIGHBORS, CD

Ten tracks of emo pop/rock ala the Get Up Kids, except the vocals are a bit hard to understand due to what sounds like a very thick Scottish accent. They also seem to be recorded very low, but even so, its upbeat, catchy, and not terrible. (ES)
Lollipop 35, Chemin de la Nerthe 13016 Marseille France

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Andy Slob (AS)

The Replacements' Sorry Ma, Forgot to Take Out the Trash is the kind of album that I kick people out of my house for not liking, strike that, loving. This still sends shivers up my spine when I listen to the heartfelt songs that these four teens from the Midwest put out in 1981. The brutal honesty of a band ripping out tune after tune just to alleviate the boredom of growing up in this wasteland of America. Obviously raised on album oriented rock, The Replacements bastardized that learning into an all out rocker of an American punk classic. Forget the politics, let's just write songs about our daily lives. Bad concerts, hangin' out, gettin' drunk are all subjects that are hit with an unheard of realism today. This is pure alcohol drenched attitude, more frenzied and chaotic than a thousand grind core bands, and more emotional than a million emo bands. Get this now, worship it, idolize it, and if you're in a band, just see if you can make something that lives up to this. Also recommended, The Replacements - Stink. Until these two are fully digested, you should avoid any other releases, as they latter became college radio darlings of the near singer/songwriter variety.

Newer releases that entertain my brain. Both of the first discs in the two new Devo double CD comps, "Pioneers Who Got Scalped" and "Recombo DNA". The Vectors - "Death To Disco" LP and The GO - "Whatcha Doin'" CD. Guilty pleasure - Kid Rock.

that is supposed to heat the whole room, but usually only heats the people within a ten foot radius. There's a lot of open space for bands to play, and lots of ratty couches for kids to sit on. I saw Drowningman here last year and they put on a kick-ass show. They played a mix of heavy hardcore and metal, adding more melodic rock parts with the occasional bursts of pretty singing, between a lot of screaming. I bought their first full length on Hydra Head, and was pretty happy with it. The record lived up to the live band. Then for some reason, they switched labels, and now they are on Revelation with a four song EP. Musically they haven't progressed at all, it's still the combination of metal and hardcore, and it's still just as good. The design on this release is an excellent mix of collage and type, all wrapped up in a nice red jewel case. The worst thing about it is the length, clocking in at 13 minutes. (RE)

ELEVENTH SYMPHONY – STIMULATE, DESTROY, RESTORE, 7"

These guys take some interesting aspects of several bands and meld them together to try and achieve something new and interesting. For the most part they succeed. They go from your straight ahead punk sound similar to Crimpshrine, change gears all together to something mocking the South Park theme, then go to some subdued rock before returning to the punk formula. All this just happens with within the first track.

This 7" is chaotic and multi directional but is held together quite well. The front man's voice may be a bit hard for some to get around. He reminds me of Stabb of Government Issue in some ways. But with layered vocals and harmonies on some parts, the vocal style tends to compliment this release. Overall this is a complete success and is a fresh breath for the better in my opinion. Eleventh Symphony may be a bit rough around the edges, but it seems to add to their charm. (DM)

THE ENDING AGAIN – S/T, 7"

If there's a great band you've never heard of in the Midwest, they're probably out of Minneapolis. The Ending Again play incredible garage rock, but unlike so many contemporary garage-influenced bands they don't sound like they're slumming or faking it. There's no intentionality, no post-hi-fi conversions to lo-fi, and no gimmicks. These guys just rock! Recorded in one quick session, these four songs are fast and raw. The lyrics are highbrow and humorous, especially those for the song "Remember the Alamo." This record has it all, but again, it doesn't seem coolly calculated. You can tell these guys grew up listening to a range of punk and garage sounds and this is what they came up sounding like together. I hope this band at least sticks together long enough for me to catch 'em live. Great, GREAT GREAT record. (AE)

CAMERA OBSCURA – TO CHANGE THE SHAPE OF AN ENVELOPE, CD

A full release with a My Bloody Valentine sound. But wait, then it sounds like The Fall! Yes, it is schizophrenic with tons of melodies. A great listen. (SY)
Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow Street, Bayonne, NJ 07002

CATTLE PRESS – HORDES TO ABOLISH THE DIVINE, CD

Straight forward without too many tricks. This album was written over a three-year span so you get some variations between songs in writing styles. In the end it is all metal. (SY)
Hydrahead PO BOX 990248, Boston, MA 02199

CHARM CITY SUICIDES – GREEN BLOOD, 7"

Even more lo-fi than the Mummies, these guys from Baltimore play obnoxious garage rock a la the most obnoxious garage band you can think of. This record sounds like shit, and the packaging is even worse, but it's pretty fuckin' punk. Give 'em and 'A' for attitude. (BJM)
Baths of Power Records, 48 Glen Alpine Rd., Phoenix MD 21131

CHICKEN LEG – S/T, CD

Lo-fi rock and roll with lots of blues, country, and punk influences. Home-made and weird. (RE)

No address

CHURNER – A WESTBOUND TRAIN TO ANYWHERE, CD

Loud, noisy post-punk style music with screamed vocals. Interspersed between songs are shorter, incidental pieces, based on acoustic guitar riffs, which provide a break from the chaos. (BJM)

Bitter End Records, PO Box 3802, Fairfax VA
22038-3802

COME ON – NEW YORK CITY 1976-1980, CD

The Come On are an obscure New York band that had one single out in the late 70's. This disc includes their self-released single plus studio and live output. Along the lines of early Talking Heads or Richard Hell. Really good geeky New Wave stuff that any fan should buy. (EA)

Heliocentric CDs 69 Cooper Square, NY, NY 10003

A COMMON THREAD-BLIND SOLUTION EP

On the verge of something very cool but ACT simply come across as typical. Positive Straightedge Hardcore with a strong 7 Seconds lean. (MY)

Fleshban PO Box 36624 Birmingham, AL 35236

CROSS MY HEART – THE REASON I FAILED**HISTORY, CD**

Four song CDEP that continues their efforts of their debut full length. Emo music to the maximum - it has all the quiet parts and the screaming parts that every emo release always has. (EA)

Dim.Mak PO Box 14041 Santa Barbara, CA 93107

*** CURSIVE – DOMESTICA, CD**

See review above.

Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554

DAYCARE SWINDLERS-TESTOSTEROSA, CD

As soon as I heard the first note I knew I would like it. Its fast, harsh, super catchy hardcore not unlike the English Dogs (newer) So imagine my letdown when I find out that this CD has a ton of awful Ska on it. (MY)

Vile Beat PO Box 42462, Washington DC 20015

DEGARNE – THE LAST DANCE, 7"

The lyrics for all 3 songs are in German, so I have no idea what they're singing about. But if evil, chaotic hardcore is your thing, you'll probably like this. (ES)

Fehrfeld 26 28203 Bremen Germany

DEMENTIA THIRTEEN – DO THE SNAKE!, 7"

If the latest psychedelic/garage craze isn't over for you, you'll be interested in this single. It's got a great beat and you can dance to it! They made all the right moves. Give it a spin if you run across it. (RB)

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Art Ettinger (AE)

GG Allin remains one of the most misunderstood and unfairly maligned artists in the history of punk. People forget that GG played music and lots of it, with 1988's "Expose Yourself to Kids" 7" by GG & the AIDS Brigade as the high point. The three songs on this essential EP are three of the catchiest, funniest, and most perverted songs ever. The music is GG's poppiest material since the Jabbers, but with harsher vocals. "Hangin' Out With Jim" shows GG's homosexual side through an analogy about loving Jim Beam, "I'm a Gypsy Motherfucker" lays down GG's scatological approach to touring, and "Expose Yourself to Kids" makes fun of America's obsession with punishing pedophiles. In these PC times, GG is more relevant than ever! Play this record to the next alleged left-winger who goes on about how certain types of criminals deserve life without parole or the death penalty. If you think punk rock is about freedom and a sense of humor, then GG's the artist for you. Check out the great recent GG collections on Munster and TPOS, the GG book on Recess, and any GG video you can get your hands on. If you can't find the "Expose Yourself" 7", it's also available on compilations put out by TPOS and Merle Allin, and should be on the next volume of GG Singles to go digital. GG might be dead, but his music lives on!

Besides my undying obsession with everything by The Wretched Ones and the new GG collection on Munster, I've also been listening to the new Moloko Men LP, TKO Records' Bruisers collection, and the Toxic Narcotic 89-99 LP.

GAMEFACE / ERRORTYPE:II - WHAT'S UP BRO?, CD

I don't know why I have the hang up to comment on this, but does anyone remember when Gameface used to really rock? These guys always had a somewhat polished sound, but they used to really rock it. Now it seems they play rock. That may not be the most ground breaking comment, but I think some may agree. Christ, they're playing a Tom Petty tune ("Change Of Heart") and it completely sounds like newer Gameface stuff. Oh well. Errortype:11 is not that far behind. I'm not all that familiar with this band but they too seem to be going in that alternative rock direction. The Split Enz cover of "I Got You" is a bit more interesting than the original songs though. Not that either band is lacking in talent by any means at all. It's just that I would have hoped for a bit more coming from Revelation. So much for taking chances. This is a safe one, not to worry. Nothing to see here... (DM)

A GLOBAL THREAT - UNTIL WE DIE..., CD

Even though I have heard countless bands in this genre, A Global Threat was a real godsend among the other mostly lightweight puff that I got to review for this issue.

Good, up-tempo, punk rock that seems to be more influenced by British bands like One Way System, GBH, Exploited, Etc than let's say Rancid. Sure, all the subject matter has been sung about before, racism, equality, violence in our society, etc. But the one thing that this dual vocalized band remembered, something that bands tend to forget these days, was to make big catchy sing along choruses that could have you up bouncing around the room. I really enjoyed the song, "Young and Dead" where they veered away from the formula used for the rest of their tunes. All in all, this was fourteen songs that were pleasant to my ears (although I don't believe that 'pleasant' is the term that they would prefer) with good thick production that current fans of say Violent Society or Submachine would not be disappointed with. And you can pretty much guess as to what they look like. How about some nice business suits for some nonconformity in this art form? (AS)

GOOD RIDDANCE - THE PHENOMENON OF CRAVING, CD

Boy did I expect this to suck! Fat Wreck Chords sucks, right? Big label bands suck, right? I always hated people who judged bands based on what labels they were on etc., and there I was frowning upon Good Riddance without even knowing what they sound like.

Smilin' Bob Records, P.O. Box 1002, Homewood, IL 60430-0002

DEPRESSOR, S/T 7"

Six songs of slow, grinding, metallic crust-core, complete with barked vocals. (BJM)

PO Box 472007, San Francisco CA 94147

*** DIANOGAH - BATTLE CHAMPIONS, CD**

See review above.

Southern PO Box 577375 Chicago, IL 60657

THE DICKELE BROTHERS - VOL. 2, CD

Old time string music done in the 21st century. Only a label like Empty Records can bring you stuff like this. It is a real enjoyable record, I am not so sure that any punk under the age of 25 will even give this a chance. (EA)
Empty Records PO Box 12034 Seattle, WA 98102

DOLORES - OF RESOLUTION AND HAPPINESS, 7"

A two song single of melodic, indie/emo rock. The combination of the production on the vocals, the warm guitar sound, and the warm sound of the vinyl give it a My Bloody Valentine feel, though I wouldn't necessarily say that the music is that similar. (BJM)

Johann's Face Records, PO Box 479164, Chicago IL 60647

*** DROWNINGMAN - HOW THEY LIGHT****CIGARETTES IN PRISON, CDEP**

See review above.

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232 Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

DURIAN - SOMETIMES YOU SCARE ME, CD

Fuck I hate this CD, this band, these people I'll probably even hate Arlington after this torturous chore. Stupid high-pitched sing songy vocals over experimental indie rock that reminds me of the Pixies if they sucked. (MY)
Diver City Records, 882 N. Harrison St Arlington, VA 22205

EBS - PACK A PICNIC WITH, CD

Skilled snotty musicians with a serious NO-FX fetish self release a CD. Message to Fat Mike: you may want to swoop up these silly fuckers! (MY)

EBS c/o Josh Giunta, 145 Gibson Road Goshen, NY 10924

*** ELEVENTH SYMPHONY - STIMULATE, DESTROY, RESTORE, 7"EP**

See review above.

Cobalt Room Records, 5884 Juvene Way Cincinnati, OH 45233

ELLIOTT - IF THEY DO, CD

More heartfelt renderings that mix good with coffee and backpacks. The music is far from abrasive and the text is obtrusive. (AS)

Initial PO box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217

ELLIOTT SMITH - DIVISION DAY/ NO NAME #6, CD

2 tracks of T-Rex like pop. More keyboards than guitars in the mix of things. (BC)

Suicide Squeeze Records 4505 University Way N.E., #434, Seattle, WA. 98105

*** THE ENDING AGAIN - S/T, 7"**

See review above.

Modern Radio Record Label, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408

THE ESSEX GREEN, CD

Happy, floaty pop tunes with lots of flute and acoustic guitar. Sounds like Belle and Sebastian teamed up with Jethro Tull. (JK)

The Elephant Six Recording Co. Denver CO 80205



REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian Czarnik (BC)

The 7 inch that started it all for me...Sludgeworth's debut 7 inch on Roadkill Records. I remember the day like it was just a couple of years ago (now it is actually 10 years ago). I was driving home from my shit job as a package sorter at U.P.S. when I heard on W.N.U.R. the song and aggressive sound that spoke to me "Someday" by some band that I would have to sit through a couple of more tunes before the DJ told me the name of the band. I wrote down the name "sludgeworth" on a piece of paper and after my classes I went to a local metal store to see if they carried this band's record. To my surprise, the store had a small stack of 5 of them under the display case. I went home and listened to it about 50 times in a row. The dirty pop sounds that I kind of associated with the soundtrack of "Valley Girl" (I wasn't a punk yet, so give me a break, and I was also a virgin, SO THERE!) were pulling me in. All four tunes (Follow (which never seemed long enough) Someday, Angry Man, and Two Feet on The Ground) were all perfect tunes to get me through my messy days. I later learned about Screeching Weasel and the connection of the bands and all that Chicago Punk historical stuff. But it was simply this little 7 inch that made me into a punk rock drummer/ zine writer/ local scene-star/ and now just the punk wild exotic animal caretaker that I am today. The songs were all re-done for their debut record, (and the Lookout Records release from Sludgeworth) but they never sounded as good as on this 7-inch. I am looking at it right now, and it is all mine. I can't believe that it is a decade old this year. Time flies when you're a punk I guess. This record will always be a big part of my life. The 7-inch that started it all.

Shame on me. And shame on you as well, if you were thinking what I was about this band. This is a first-rate EP. Okay, it IS a bit overproduced, but the songs are all incredible and the music and lyrics aren't what you'd expect. There's a heavy pop influence, but this is pretty much a NY hardcore record sans lyrics about killing people who eat meat. The songs are political, but not in that dopey dogmatic way that political punk tends towards. These guys know how to balance pop against more vigorous hardcore, and this balance is reflected in the lyrics which are personal without being embarrassing and political without being preachy. Some of the proceeds go to the Homeless Garden Project in Santa Cruz. So get off your snob anti-big label ass and check this out. (AE)

GRAYLING - S/T, CD

The production on this album compliments the music perfectly: the songs are a jangly blend of straight rock, garage, and pop. The sound is clean enough to hear everything, but not so squeaky clean that it detracts from the garage sound of it. The bass drum is fat sounding, almost like on an album recorded by Steve Albini, and it provides the perfect basis for the rock. The vocals are slightly distorted on some songs, which also works to the songs' advantage. The vocalist sings catchy

melodies and sings the words clearly. He reminds me of Kurt Cobain at times. They're a three piece; I can't deny the Nirvana influence. The best part, though, is the tone of the guitars: it's warm, with just a bit of distortion, and the guitar sound and melodies really make some of the songs. For once, we have a band who knows how to get a good tone out of a guitar and an amp. The best song is "Kill," a rocking number about serial murder for kicks. The one problem with this record is that with 17 tracks, it wears a little thin by the end. Definitely a great effort though. I'd like to see them live. (BJM)

IMBALANCE/THE PROPAGUMBHIS - SPLIT, CD

Call me sheltered, but I didn't know there were bands like this in England. Silly me—preachy sxe is international! Imbalance is the better of the two bands, with their bass-heavy sound and cool mysterious vocals. If Shelter were ever good and if they were from England they'd sound something like these guys. It's hard not to clomp around while Imbalance is playing. I could do without some of the emo-laden guitar drills, but this is HARDCORE. Gotta love a sarcastic number called "Pet Rabbit," whose only lyric is stabbed him in the face to see if my knife worked." A fun time was had

E.S.P. - BEHIND ENEMY LINES, CD

They can't be behind enemy lines, they don't have any enemies. Everyone loves these squeaky-clean lads and their laid back pseudo-punk sound. Except God. I'll bet the deity is sick of their sappy whining and lackluster attempts. (RB)

Head Trip Records

EULOGY - DAWN OF DECADES, CD

Very strange experimental release. Some straight hardcore, but mostly the songs are goofy hi-tech experiments with an industrial influence. (AE)

Eulogy, 224 North Camac St., Philadelphia, PA 19107

EVERLASTING THE WAY - LONG-STRETCH-MOTORCYCLE-HYMN-HIGHWAY, CD

This is an avant-garde type of minimalist indie rock project. A lot of intro's and outro's, tape loops, and just acoustic guitar at times too. It's a peculiar blend of music that lacks any particular order, style or focus. Interesting for some, but definitely not for all. (DM)

Monitor, PO Box 2361 Baltimore, MD 21203

FACE DOWN - FORGETTING THE CONSTANT FEAR, CD

Listen boys you sound sexist & ignorant when you try to tackle body image issues and sexuality in your lyrics (In Vain). The music is thick-necked Straightedge jock metal

from Canada. This singer brings to mind the exceptional vocalist of Throwdown. Above average! (MY)
Tribunal Records, PO Box 49322 Greensboro, NC 27419-1322

FALSE FACE SOCIETY - GAME FACE ON, CD

Weird alternative metal band. There are a lot of religious and environmental themes in their lyrics. Radio friendly metal with punk unfriendly lyrics. (NS)
Sin Klub Entertainment, P.O. Box 2507, Toledo, OH 43606

FIN FANG FOOM-RAVENOUS B/W BLOOD & IRON EP

We start with a soft piano that goes into pseudo avant guard experimental jazz then turns into light Emo. "So eclectic they'll make you sick." Feeble grasps at No Means No can also be found throughout. (MY)
Tritone Records, 403 Gary rd Carrboro, NC (no zip)

FIVE IRON FRENZY - ALL THE HYPE THAT MONEY CAN BUY, CD

15 tracks of energetic, poppy ska-rock, complete with horns, with a corny 80s pop music sound to it here and there. (BJM)

Five Minute Walk Records, 2056 Commerce Ave, Concord CA 94520

FORSTELLA FORD - INSINCERITY DOWN TO AN

ARTFORM, CD

Emocore with the soft and hard parts and pained vocals. Yes, now I feel your pain too. (AS)
The Mountain Cooperative, PO Box 220320, Greenpoint Post Office, Brooklyn, NY 11222-9997

FREE STOCKING - BRING THE SPIRIT, CD

Melodic hardcore from Spain complete with a horn section. Couple of ska songs, but they steer clear of mixing it with the punk. Not unlike Voodoo Glow Skulls. In English. (AS)

Tralla Records, Ap. Co. 37-119, 08080 Barcelona, Spain

* GAMEFACE / ERRORTYPE:II - WHAT'S UP BRO?, CD

See review above.

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232 Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

GARRISON - A MILE IN COLD WATER, CD

The usual drivel for music with the usual emo drivel for lyrics. (RB)

Revelation, P.O. Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232

GAUGE- :I, CD

In the early 1990's Gauge meant all that was emo in Chicago. Here is their story on one c.d. (BC)

Tree Records P.O. Box 578582 Chicago, IL 60657

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Brian J. Manning (BJM)

Johnny Cash , Live at Folsom Prison and San Quentin was originally released as two separate albums when it was recorded in the 1960s, but now it is available on one CD. For those unfamiliar with Johnny Cash, he was one of the original Sun Studios recording artists in the 1950s, along with rockers such as Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, and Jerry Lee Lewis. He went on to establish himself as one of the most popular and influential country artists since Hank Williams. A noble character, the great Johnny Cash played a number of shows for inmates, and these were two that were recorded and officially released. This CD is 25 tracks of solid country songs, ranging from traditional ballads such as "Dark as the Dungeon" to rockin' country tunes such as "Cocaine Blues." To the delight of those incarcerated there, he plays "Folsom Prison Blues" (which features the famous lyric: "I shot a man in Reno / Just to watch him die"). The mix is terrific; you can hear all the instruments, and you can the audience cheer for particular lines he sings ("Far from Folsom Prison / That's where I want to stay"). The banter between songs adds to the performance as well. Among my favorite tracks are those on which he sings duets with his wife, June Carter, of the Carter family. These include "Jackson," and "Darlin' Companion." Cash is an original: he sings country because he is country. This album is a must have for any fan of good country, of good punk, or simply of good music.

New records that I am listening to are few and far between.

by all. One of the songs, "Moral High Horse," sounds like S.O.D.! As for The Propagumbhis, they're good too. Someone should have really advised 'em against the dorky name, but punk-ska doesn't get any better than these 4 songs. It's a good thing I picked GG as my classic pick of the month, 'cuz it sure is hard for me to recommend a band with a song called "Meat Free Anthem (for a New Tomorrow)," but Propagumbhis are 2000X better than the punk-ska bands that are popular today and really do show how that subgenre can work. Overall, an admirable split CD. (AE)

INFINITY SIGN - ?, CD

The band name only appears as a symbol that either looks like a poorly drawn infinity sign or an eight that is rotated ninety degrees. Where the hell would you find this in a store? It usually takes megastars like Prince or Led Zeppelin to pull off this symbolic bullshit. Anyhow, what separates this release from similar emo hardcore projects is that these guys tend to actually rock at times bringing to mind bands like, oddly enough, Janes Addiction and Dagnasty. They know how to pay homage to the almighty guitar riff punctuating the music with an innovative dual guitar attack. And believe it or not some of the songs have choruses that are memorable. Just wish that the vocals were

a little more powerful during their forays into the slower more sensitive stuff. Some tunes go on for too long, but parts of this will definitely bang your head. (AS)

KEELHAUL - S/T, CD

A sucker punch! This one surprised me. I did expect to listen to this and enjoy it for its heaviness and metal sound. I did not realize that this record would be so damn unique! This CD is out on Escape Artist Records, which has a mixed track record for me. The Isis "Mosquito Control" EP was one of my favorite releases of last year. On the other hand, I couldn't find interest in the Time In Malta or Burn It Down releases also on Escape Artist. Now I have a newfound interest in the label and along with the new Isis 2xLP I am won over. Keelhaul play carefully crafted riffs and you could almost consider them an instrumental hardcore band. The vocals are sparse and remind me much of early Neurosis. Countless rhythm changes leave it sounding interesting. It caught my ear the same way Black Flag's "Process Of Weeding Out" did when I actually got sick of Hank's vocals. One good riff that is almost played to death and everyone adds on top of. The end result is gold. Features members of Craw and Integrity, so the credibility for heaviness is

*** A GLOBAL THREAT - UNTIL WE DIE..., CD**

See review above. (AS)

GMM Records, POB 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333

GOLDEN - DEEP SKILLS AND VIOLATOR, 7"

This "double A-sided record" is art-rock with the emphasis on the rock. This is some powerful shit, featuring members of Trans Am. (AE)

The Bedtime Record, PO Box 9142, Chattanooga, TN 37412

GOLDEN SUMMER - S/T, CD

Eek.. at times, reminded me of the Doors with their trippy guitars and experimental stuff, and other times sounded a bit like Polvo. Mostly though, this nine song CD is filled with sporadic slurred vocals over weird acid rock jams. (ES)

Slowdime Records POB 414 Arlington, VA 22210

GOMORRHA/HELLCHILD - SPLIT 7"

The Gomorra side- evil, fast chugga chugga double bass German hardcore that sounds like the singer is trying to cough up a hair ball. The Hellchild side- see "The Gomorra side". (ES)

Stickfigure P.O. Box 55462 Atlanta, GA 30308

*** GOOD RIDDANCE - THE PHENOMENON OF CRAVING, CD**

See review above.

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690

*** GRAYLING - S/T CD**

See review above.

Dead Drift 29721 Quinkert, Roseville MI 48066

GREAT LAKES - S/T, CD

Some pretty laid back rock that's rather lacking on the energy. A morbid mix of Ben Folds Five and The Eagles. I don't care about the former and I despise the latter.

Seriously, this sounds like it could fit on a 1973 top forty radio station with Linda Ronstadt. Bizarre. (RB)

Kindercore Records

GRIEF - ...AND MAN WILL BECOME THE HUNTED, CD

If you don't know, Grief is slow Doom metal. From what I gather, they could be really good as far as Doom goes.

Sludge, trudge and hate. What more do you need? (DM)

Pessimiser Records, PO Box 1070 Hermosa Beach, CA 90254

GROOVIE GHOULIES - TRAVELS WITH MY AMP, CD

Shockingly excellent la la beachy pop-punk by a unfairly pooped-on band. Great back to school punk. Love songs really can still rock. (AE)

Lookout! Records, PO Box 11374, Berkeley, CA 94712-2374

GROTTO - GET A HUSTLE, CD

Get a Scared of Chaka into a mixer with Superchunk and you get this. 12 songs from this war happy band. (BC)

Modern Radio P.O. Box 8886 Minneapolis, MN 55408

H. CHINASKI - S/T, CD

This emo disc was recorded by Bob Weston at electrical audio in Chicago. Whiny emo in all its glory. (BC)

Doubleplusgoods records P.O. Box 18721 Minneapolis, MN 55418

HALF FILM, 7 INCH

Trippy stuff from California. 2 songs to get a Beck-like trip on dude. (BC)

A.I.P. 1625 Oakwood Dr. San Mateo, CA 94403

THE HELLBENDERS - POP ROCK SUICIDE, CD

Rock and Roll first, punk rock second in this blast from Dead Beat Records. Fans of the B-Movie Rats will adore this. Fast paced, lewd and crude this disc will not disappoint fans of rock and roll. (EA)

Dead Beat Records PO Box 283 Los Angeles, CA 90078

HER SPACE HOLIDAY - SOMETHING BLUE CD

Spacey instrumental music that seems to have something to do with marriage judging from the cover art. Pretty boring. (JK)

Bravenoiserecords PO box 2268 Brandon, Fl 33509

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Dana Morse (DM)

I have always enjoyed the more nontraditional bands in all forms of music. The bands that I always strove for had something a bit different than the norm. Fuck, that's the way punk was back in the day. How often do you hear punk bands from the earlier years sounding like anyone else? Never! Well, NYC's Underdog fits that bill. They had played hardcore in a more melodic style than any other NYxHC bands of the late 80's. But it was when they released The Vanishing Point LP when things really began to change. They re-created a fusion and blended reggae and HC together and made it their own sound instead of "copying" the Bad Brains. Songs of scene love, unity and believing in oneself overflow with emotion and determination. Richie's (pre-Into Another) vocals cut right through you while Chuck Teece's (McRad, other skate bands) guitar just plain rocked. This was the best thing to come out of NYC's new school era of HC. Thanks to Go-Kart Records for re-releasing the album but I wish they used the original art work instead of a poor imitation of the original.

What I've been listening to: Them featuring DosOne of Anticon, the new Bonfire Madigan, At The Drive In/ Sunshine split, White Flag's Sgt. Pepper.

there. I believe this is actually a re-release so you can thank the folks at Escape Artist for keeping it from obscurity. (SY)

LANDING - S/T, CD

I was at South by South West this year, when Isaac Brock from Modest Mouse stepped on stage with Sam Jayne from Love as Laughter on drums and the two of them, playing under the name Ugly Casanova, played a handful of supposedly spontaneous songs. On one song, Brock jokingly said that he would now play a "trance" song in which the audience would either totally fall asleep or leave. He proceeded to play chords and would echo and repeat them with a number of pedals at his feet, building until he had made this awesome wall of sound. And yes it was difficult to stand through, but oddly relaxing at the same time. Landing play music similar to this, except they never really let the chords build long enough before they fade out. Each song, on this five song disc is comprised of very minimal, simple drum parts, laid back keyboards, and quiet, drifting guitar parts. This makes for a very sleepy listener by the time the fourth song begins. The very calm vocals that come in are almost unnoticed. Minimal music comes with minimal packaging, and this CD is packaged like an LP, with a sleeve for the CD even. I've always felt that CD's should be packaged like records...it just makes so much sense. (RE)

LEATHERFACE - HORSEBOX, CD

They have been around England forever, but are now part of the US consciousness, thanks to their split with Hot Water Music recently. I have not gotten a chance to see them live, but from what I gather they are a force up on the stage. Few bands can write songs that are over four minutes long and keep me interested. It would be easy to compare Leatherface to a band like Jawbreaker for this very reason. The energy, drive, and hooks are impressive. The raspy vocals are so easy to fall for, you will want to sing along, straining your voice as you read the lyrics. A cover of Cyndi Lauper's "True Colors" is included and frankly they almost pull it off - its just a little too cheesy for me, sorry. Leatherface are more rock and roll than the typically tagged "emo" band and should be treated as such. The song "Evo Pop" may easily take you where Leatherface is coming from. See how this makes you feel before you buy this highly recommended BYO release, "I never ever want to see you again, for what it is worth, I'm never ever going to get stung again, not one more time, never." I can feel association and I have been happily married and dating the same girl for 12+ years. (EA)

MISS LONELYHEART - GEOGRAPHY, CD

Indie type emo rock that moves and soothes. For those that care, this appears to be produced by J. Robbins of Jawbox fame so the similarities to his band can be easily drawn. Much of this could be considered radio friendly, as I can picture this

HER SPACE HOLIDAY - SILENT FILMS, CD

I know I am not suppose to say the word "crappy" in a descriptive review, so I wont. Please forward disc to dog crap planet. (BC)

Dogprint P.O. Box 2120 Teaneck, NJ 07666

HIP TANAKA - LE JIHAD CD

You know how when you're a kid, and your parents drag you to state fairs and there's always some kind of cheesy "rock" band playing on a stage wedged between the corn dog stand and the color wheel game? Hip Tanaka sounds like one of those bands. (ES)

The Local 33 1/3 Label P.O. Box 918 Allston, MA 02134

HOPELIFTER - THE ANTHEM CD

Over the next 5 years the Warped tour (or Punkorama) will feature weaker, softer, less threatening bands. Hopelifter will probably be on the bill when the watering down process is final. (MY)

No Theory Records, PO Box 5040 Sonora, CA 95370

*** IMBALANCE/ THE PROPAGUMBHIS - SPLIT, CD**

See review above.

Blind Bear Records, PO Box 309, Leeds LS2 7AH, ENGLAND

THE IMPOSSIBLES - RETURN, CD

A decent album of power pop ditties with some annoying emo tinges and a heavy Weezer influence. New Alkaline Trio let you down? No replacement, but worth a try. (RB)
Fueled by Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville, FL 32604

*** INFINITY SIGN - ?, CD**

See review above. (AS)
Hope Records, PO Box 71154, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

INK - S/T, CD

Ex Candy Machine and Science Kit members make complex pop. The songs are straight pop, with lots of tempo changes. (AE)

Monitor Records, PO Box 2361, Baltimore, MD 21203

THE JUDAS FACTOR - KISS SUICIDE, CD

6 songs from a band on corporate suicide kissin' revelations records. Hardcore from N.Y.C. that lasts 6 songs. (BC)

Revelations Records (you know the address)

KANGRENA - TERRORISMO SONORO, 7"

Sex Pistols styled punk with a more interesting sound than most old school punk. Lyrics in Spanish. (NS)

Anarchi Rekords c/o Tralla Records
www.trallarecords.com

*** KEELHAUL - S/T, CD**

See review above.

Escape Artist Records, PO BOX 472, Downingtown, PA 19335-0472

KELETON DMD - BODY DOUBLE, CD

A powerful and much needed release from this Michigan trio. Lots of tempo changes while keeping it melodic and interesting. (SY)

Makoto Recordings, PO Box 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005

KERBLOKI - S/T, CD

I can't say whether this is good or not. White Boy hip-hop similar to old break dancing music mixed with electric guitars and drums with songs of Sushi Bars and Steel Wheels. This will probably be the new License To Ill for the "hip" indie kids. This isn't bad... (DM)

[HTTP://KERBLOKI.HOME.MINDSPRING.COM/](http://KERBLOKI.HOME.MINDSPRING.COM/)

KEVIN K. BAND - ORIENTAL NIGHTS, CD

Glam rocker Kevin K. documents his live experiences in Japan. Plenty of Johnny Thunders and Trash Brats songs included! (SY)

Elmer Records, Kevin K, PMB # 108,9061 US 19 North, Pinellas Park, FL 33782

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Eric Action (EA)

I was originally going to pick the Minutemen's "Double Nickels on the Dime" for this issue, but it was already chosen and hence my next choice. November 28th, 1977 – four English art students release one of years best LP's in a year that saw a lot of great punk. Wire's "Pink Flag" contains 21 short songs from left field that have timings and structure that 20+ years later still don't make any sense. It all works so wonderful! I get a smile every time I see the classic cover, a tall flag pole with a raised pink flag in an empty field (how artistic! A statement?). So many songs on this album have been covered relentlessly: "Reuters", "Ex Lion Tamer", "Mr. Suit" and the famous "12XU". Nobody gets close to the original (except for the New Bomb Turks cover of "Mr. Suit"). I am always amazed at how few kids know this record, it was real hard to find on CD and the LP easily goes for \$20 for a decent copy if you find someone willing to sell it. I would suggest their sophomore LP, "Chair's Missing" almost as vital, but its "Pink Flag" that will always stand the test of time. Each song contains just a few sentences of lyrics that are often vague, confusing, and ready to be interpreted. Unlike many early punk classics, it doesn't sit at all one tempo, there are slower songs mixed in – but they aren't long boring songs to prove artistic merit. I can sit down and listen to both sides and sing along with lyric sheet in hand and feel different about this LP every time.

Currently records cluttering my room: New Headcoats LP and single, Both Real Kids compilations on Norton, re-release of Nikki and the Corvettes on Bomp, and the Modern Lovers 2XLP on Munster.

appealing to the masses that are into Foo Fighters or other guitar based rock. It's just that too much of this kind of stuff seems to be flooding the market leaving the good ones overlooked and the bad mistakenly hailed as the next big thing. Complex music and deep lyrics leave my ears unjolted, and sometimes I just don't get it. Carry on wayward sons! (AS)

MODESTY – THANK YOU FOR SMOKING, 7"

So I don't understand the title of this 7". Thank you for smoking? Is that an allusion to their smokin' performance or something? Assurance like that probably wouldn't fit in with the band name Modesty though. They should have called this "Thank You For Pot Smoking!" That would have been hilarious! Although not as funny as my favorite bumper sticker, "My other car is a bong." But back to Modesty. These guys howl like a dog with its ass on fire! Hooowwwwllll! I don't really know what that means. I just thought of it. It probably wouldn't actually be that fitting for a band like this. Post hardcore bands don't really howl. They post I guess. Well these guys post like a son of a bitch! There are only 2 songs, but they're good songs. The first is mellow and reminds me of Jimmy Eat World. Quiet

parts with well sung vocals and then louder parts. The second song is a little heavier with really cool drumming. Mostly I don't really pay attention to drums, but they stand out in this band. Not that they're mixed too loud or anything, they're just good. This song reminds me more of Texas Is The Reason or By A Thread. Why does it seem like Swedish bands are always pretty good? I mean, Sweden cranks out a lot of mediocre pop punk bands, but they're mostly pretty good at being mediocre. And bands like this and Refused and D.S. 13 seem to play their respective types of hardcore really well. Maybe it's the production. Sweden must have really good sound engineers or something. I'm done. (NS)

MY HERO DIED TODAY – THE CITY WILL PAY FOR THIS, CD

The scene: a crowded punk club somewhere, anywhere. A girl points at a kid staring at the wall crying and says, "HIS HERO IS GONE...." The kid, still crying mutters, "MY HERO DIED TODAY...he was a HERO OF A HUNDRED FIGHTS..." God, that was pretty awful. I apologize. I love the number of bands that share similar themes. How about the onslaught of bands that have three word names, and they all end with either "Project" or "Plan." What about the theme of airplanes that runs

KIDS INC.– KIDS INC. IS DEAD, 7"

Four songs filled with slightly off-key vocals, half rock/half acoustic rock. Reminds me a little of Barenaked Ladies but much worse. (ES)
Gradwell Records 58 Gradwell Ave. Maple Shade, NJ 08052

KOTTER – S/T, 7"

This band, from the beautiful suburb of Homewood, IL plays better than average pop-punk that wants to be emo because of the singer's sung/screamed vocals. This would have been awesome about four years ago. (RE) Smilin' Bob Records, PO Box 1002 Homewood, IL 60430 – 0002

THE KOWALSKIS – ALL HOPPED UP ON GOOFBALLS, CD

Hard driven rock and roll with an excellent female vocalist. Contains a cover of Devo's "Uncontrollable Urge". One can take a guess that this bands is really good live, the disc sounds live (minus a few overdubs) and gives the feeling of fun and energy. (EA)

Engine Records PO Box 1575, NYC, NY 10009

KRILL – MASS PARTICLES, CD

Weird, slightly atonal free jazz. Not really sure why this was sent to Punk Planet, but it's pretty interesting. (JK) 1843 Irving St. NW Washington D.C. 20010

*** LANDING – S/T, CD**

See review above.
The Music Fellowship, PO Box 581035 Salt Lake City, UT 84158

*** LEATHERFACE – HORSEBOX, CD**

See review above.

BYO Records

LUCERO – ST, 7"

Two songs of alt country twang, one being a Jawbreaker song. Well played and interesting if you don't mind a little honky tonk. Good late night drinking music. (NS)
Landmark Records, P.O. Box 251565, Little Rock, AR 72225

MAINE – MOTOR HOME, CD

They're from Spain and they're called Maine. They play what I call emo hardcore. Enunciated in English. Hard to follow lyrics on the enhanced CD with pro video. (AS)
Tralla Records, Aptdo. 37119, 08080 Barcelona, Spain

MAQUILADORA – WHITE SANDS, CD

An album's worth of slow, strange songs, that don't really resemble any form of rock. I can't think of one band to which I can compare them. (BJM)
Lotushouse Records/Bang! Belgium

MAXWELL HORSE – BABY NAMES FROM THE BIBLE, CD

Jangly indie rock stuff with soft vocals and intricate guitar work. This reminds me of old Built To Spill. (NS)
Dimed Records, highhorse@mhorse.com

MEISHA – MEISHA RETURNS MEISHA FOREVER, CD

Very slow and annoying instrumentals mostly based in piano, but creeps into the world of minimalist guitar and bass now and again. (RB)

MICROPHONES – FEEDBACK, 7"

If there could be a minimalist, indie band that was the exact opposite but still in the same vein, this would be it. Microphones lacks the sound to be easily categorized by a single term. Maybe post rock, avant-garde, indie rock with occasional samples. How's that sound? Sounds good like this 7". (DM)

Bedtime Records, PO Box 9142 Chattanooga, TN 37412



REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Erin Schleckman (ES)

I'm kind of ashamed to admit this, but an ex-boyfriend introduced me to the whole "punk rock scene". I mean, I knew about bands like Green Day and the Descendents, but other than a few mainstream punk bands, I was pretty oblivious to the rest of the underground subculture I was missing out on. For the record, I was not one of those "ATM Machine/Coat Rack" girlfriends or anything, he'd just take me to shows now and then and make me mix tapes of bands like Snapcase, Endpoint, Gorilla Biscuits, and AVAIL. Those were the days, back when it was "cool" to be straightedge and we were all naive enough to think we'd stick to it. I remember driving around in his car listening to AVAIL's "Satiate" and feeling so, forgive me for saying this, "posi", and making plans to change the world. I remember the first time I saw AVAIL play, seeing kids pumping their X'ed up fists and air drumming along to songs like "Bob's Crew" and "March," doing youth crew jumps and feeling so excited and alive for what felt like the first time. To me, "Satiate" is one of those timeless records, that just about anyone could listen to and like. Fourteen tracks of uplifting, catchy songs that are not your typical pop punk Lookout! release.

Also on my record player these days... Tion - Symmetry Makes Me Calm 7", Black Cat #13 - I Blast Off! 7", Starry Eyes - s/t 7", The Book of Dead Names/Remington split 7", and Sleater-Kinney - All Hands On The Bad One LP.

through a lot of what the kids are calling "emo" these days?? Look around, it's out there. The scene will pay for this. Oh, Germany you have provided us with a band called My Hero Died Today, and while the promo sheet says they have Refused influences, I am going with more of a Boy Sets Fire reference. Political, heavy, and screamy they are. The singer sounds a lot like Nathan in Boy Sets Fire, and the music is crunchy and heavy, much like BSF. My Hero Died Today is harder than BSF in some aspects, mostly in that MHDT excludes all of the pretty singing and melody that has made BSF so famous. Lyrically, MHDT talks about scene politics, world politics, love lost, etc. It's all very honest and unpretentious and anyone who is a fan of the kind of music BSF is doing, needs to pick up this disc. (RE)

THE PLAN – THIS TIME IS NOT THIS PLACE, CD

So as you can probably tell, I'm not too fond of these long reviews. Do we really need 300 words to describe a punk rock band? Maybe Spin or Rolling Stone does, but if I ever catch myself writing things like "meandering rhythms" or "nonchalant dissidence" I'm going to, well, probably stop doing it. Unless I get paid a lot to do it. They should start of genre of music called Thesaurus Rock. It'll be weird music that you can only describe with big, verbose words. Like verbose,

which I just picked from the thesaurus. Okay, so here are some words that bands should try to avoid being described as: brutal, angular, chaotic and introspective. Instead, bands should attempt to play music that can be described by these words: ribald, cantankerous, glutinous and akimbo. Akimbo may have to be saved for descriptions of your live performance, as in, "He played with his arms akimbo." The Plan may play with their arms akimbo, but I wouldn't know, having never seen them. But from listening to this CD, I wouldn't mind doing just that. Seeing them that is. Like I said before, these guys remind me of 3 Penny Opera and Fugazi. 2 singers, 2 guitarists, uh, a bassist and a drummer. And some other weird instruments that I've never heard of. Post hardcore with rockin' parts and mellow grooves too. The CD comes in a nice hand made case with lyrics and arty pictures. I like to come in nice hand made things too! (NS)

QUIXOTE – PROTESTS OF THE WEAK, LP

The masterpiece that I have been waiting for. I remember the first time I saw Quixote. Joel Wick was also playing in Jihad at the time, and after watching Quixote, I was amazed that Joel could actually play bass. I thought Jihad was worthless and always took up the opportunity to remind Joel of this even though every emo-wuss in the coun-

MILEMARKER-CHANGING CARING HUMANS CD

Singles and comp track collection from this exceptionally strange punk/indie/emo collective whose style is absolutely all over the place. This makes me feel warm inside. Its as if Born Against were on stage with the Pixies and Unsane.

Recommended! (MY)

Stickfigure, PO Box 55462 Atlanta, GA 30308

M.I.J. - THE RADIO GOODNIGHT, CD

Ten pretty hardcore songs by three pretty boys from the metropolis of Lincoln. Aggressive emo-rock with non-aggressive vocals mixed high. (AE)

Caulfield Records, PO Box 84323, Lincoln, NE 68501

MINIWATT – RECTIFIERS, CD

Similar to the style of Rage Against the Machine, minus the politics. This CD contains eleven tracks of distorted vocals and angry rock. Nothing earth shattering, but overall not bad. (ES)

www.miniwatt.com

* MISS LONELYHEART – GEOGRAPHY, CD

See review above.

Molecular Laboratories, PO box 791, Frederick, MD 21705

MOCK ORANGE/THE BORGO PASS – SPLIT, 7"

Just two songs. Mock Orange plays a very pretty emo number and Borgo Pass plays a more aggressive emo number. Solid stuff. (AE)

Northern Lights, PO Box 4131, Logan, UT 84323-4131

* MODESTY – THANK YOU FOR SMOKING, 7"

See review above.

Black Star Foundation Suite 757, 211 55 Halme, Sweden

MORAL CRUX – THE SIDE EFFECTS OF THINKING, CD

This material is about eleven years old. Not being familiar with their discography, I would have to assume Panic Button and Lookout! have simply reissued it. Solid and recommended for lovers of that akin to Sham 69 and The Jam. (RB)

Panic Button, P.O. Box 148010, Chicago, IL 60614-8010

MT. ST. HELENS – ONTIME ALWAYS, CD

Upbeat Emo Punk with no direct comparisons. Just great pop songs with hooks. Pop it in your computer and be treated with a band-produced video for the first track on the disc. (SY)

ArborVitae Records, 205 East Meadows Lane,

Altamont, IL 62411

* MY HERO DIED TODAY – THIS CITY WILL PAY FOR THIS, CD

See review above.

Schematics Records, PO Box 14636 Gainesville, FL 32604

NEW MEXICAN DISASTER SQUAD – WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT OF COUNTER-TERRORISM, 7"

Fast punk rock done in that newer style that brings to mind bands like Dillinger Four, etc. Hard charging, catchy and lifelike. (AS)

discos muy guapo, P.O. Box 536631, Orlando, FL 32853-6631

NOBODY CARES/CHACHI ON ACID – SPLIT 7"

Nobody Cares play fast, snotty punk in the Grimple vein. Chachi On Acid play a little faster and thrasher like Stikky. 20 songs of silly, speedy punk all together. (NS)

Napalm Ape Records, P.O. Box 2510, Pt. Charlotte, FL 33949

ORDINATION OF AARON – COMPLETED WORKS, CD

The complete discography of this notable Kalamazoo, MI melodic hardcore band. Defining 90's emo back in the day. Clueless? Here is a great place to start your learning. (SY)

Arcade Kahca, PO Box 620173, San Diego CA 92162

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Josh Kermiet (JK)

Well, what can be said about the Minutemen that hasn't already been said? These three ugly white guys from San Pedro California were one of the most kick ass punk bands to ever walk the earth, hands down. I remember when I first heard the Minutemen's Double Nickles on the Dime my junior year of high school it made me want to drop out and join the peace corps. I never did, and I'm not really sure I can nail down exactly it was about this album that made me feel that way, but I distinctly remember walking around my neighborhood late at night feeling truly inspired by this band to go out and make a difference. As many of you may know the Minutemen consisted of Mike Watt, George Hurley, and the late D. Boon. The Minutemen were notorious for their extremely short songs (most average about a 1 1/2 minutes) and this CD has 43 songs while the 2XLP has 45 including a Van Halen cover. While not all the tracks on this album are stellar, this is by far the most complete and cohesive release by the Minutemen, and contains many classic tracks. The thing that originally struck me about the Minutemen was how damn funky they are. When I bought this album I had never heard the Minutemen before, and was expecting something that sounded like Black Flag or the other bands from that time when what I got was a very optimistic funk band that still sounded more punk than anything I'd heard before. I think they sum it up best when they call themselves "scientist rock". Smart guys making smart music that, like the music on other classic albums, sounds just as fresh now as the day it came out.

What I'm listening to: Cat Power, Ween, Abe Froman, The Slackers, Naked City, Stereolab and Phases.

try though they were the shit. That night I made sure to tell Joel that he should ditch Jihad and put all his effort into Quixote. Jihad fizzled out over time, but Quixote has remained and triumphed. They are Indie Rock and they are Math Rock and they are better than the average bands of either genre. The first Quixote album was good yet the best thing that has happened to Quixote since then is the appearance of a new drummer named Mike Sord. Now a tight rhythm section is present providing a non-stop motion though the set. Primary songwriter / guitarist Tony Uminn is at his best. Every song is a keeper and I often find myself with the guitar riffs running through my head. Nine Songs including two instrumentals with the vocal-less tune "Slot Machine" being one of the highlights of the album. I highly recommend picking up the Vinyl, even though this is also offered on the compact disc format. You only own a CD player? Fuck you, you should own a record player. The 220-gram vinyl (thick as a plate) and European mastering allows the record to actually sound better than the CD for once. (SY)

RIVER CITY HIGH – RICHMOND HOTEL, CD

So my favorite radio station here is called "The Bone." San Francisco may suck for college radio, but The Bone reigns supreme on my radio dial. They play the standard

classic rock fare, but they'll whip out a "Boneyard Classic" sometimes, or they'll play more "obscure" songs, like "Don't Tell Me You Love Me" by Night Ranger or AC/DC's "Walk All Over You." The Bone is the best classic rock station that I've heard. Well, I guess my only other basis for comparison is WKLH, the old rock station in Milwaukee. WKLH used to have bumper stickers that said "THE HOME FOR CLASSIC HITS" and everyone used to cut out the letters to make it say "CLASSIC SHIT." Oh, sure, I'd laugh along too. But secretly I'd listen to the rock station while my friends were bumping "good" music like DJ Magic Mike and Mucky Pup. Any ways, back to River City High. They're guys are pretty rockin', but I don't expect to hear them on The Bone anytime soon. The vocals make me think of current emo/punk bands, but the music is more akin to old melodic bands like the Doughboys or the Goo Goo Dolls. You know, more rock and less of the slow build ups and quiet parts. If you like fun and upbeat music that's played well, then you'll like this. (NS)

SEAN NA NA – DANCE 'TIL YOUR BABY IS A MAN, CD

Nothing about this album really makes you want to dance. It wants to make you want to sit in a coffee shop or what have you and think of her/him, but it doesn't do

*** THE PLAN – THIS TIME IS NOT THIS PLACE, CD**
See review above.

Matlock Records 1858 Audair Blvd., Sainte-Foy QC,
G2G 1R7, Canada

A PLANET FOR TEXAS – YOU CAN STILL ROCK IN AMERICA, CD

Redneck biker punk is here to stay! Rockabilly country punk with naked breasts on the cover. (RB)
Diaphram Records, 2480 Indianola Ave, Columbus,
OH 43202

PODSTAR – S/T, CD

Podstar remind me a little of Weston, with their cutesy lyrics and fun, poppy sound, with catchy melodies and nice use of dual vocals. Sometimes a bit cookie-cutter pop, but overall not bad at all. (ES)

Noisome Records P.O. Box 3570 Lawrence, KS
66016

PRAYER FOR CLEANSING-THE RAIN IN ENDLESS FALL CD

Straightedge vegan warriors playing inventive constantly changing Iron Maiden influenced Death Metal. The singer is uncommonly good. Although it is far from Punk it comes to you recommended! (MY)

Tribunal Records, PO Box 49322 Greensboro, NC
27419-1322

PREJUDICE- INNER STRUGGLE, CD

Very metal influenced European hardcore (like Maiden, Helloween etc...). 6 songs to listen to and decide if they can really rock over there. (BC)

Hannibal's Records 95 Rte De Florissant, 1206
Geneva, Switzerland

Q AND NOT U - HOT AND INFORMED, 7"

Melodic emopop. I can hear the jaded kids groaning and thinking they've heard it all before, but really, these guys are good. Mix equal parts Promise Ring and Knapsack, and get something like Q And Not U. (ES)
Dischord

*** QUIXOTE – PROTESTS FOR THE WEAK, LP**

See review above.

Makoto PO Box 50403, Kalamazoo, MI 49005

RADIO 4 - THE NEW SONG AND DANCE, CD

Similar to their single on Gern Blandsten. Any fan of Gang of Four mixed around with Cheap Trick will go nuts over this. The rhythm section is as punchy and tight as could possibly be, they carry the whole disc. (EA)
Gern Blandsten PO Box 356 River Edge, NJ 07661

REGGIE AND THE FULL EFFECT - PROMOTIONAL COPY, CD

LOTS of styles on this full-length ranging from pop-punk to hip hop to dance music to metal. Is it a joke? (AE)

Vagrant Records, PO Box 361, 2118 Wilshire Blvd.,
Santa Monica, CA 90403

*** RIVER CITY HIGH – RICHMOND HOTEL, CDEP**
See review above.

Big Wheel Recreation, 325 Huntington Ave. #24,
Boston, MA 02115

*** SEAN NA NA – DANCE 'TIL YOUR BABY IS A MAN, CD**
See review above.

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ
07002

SEVER THE FALLEN - HOPE..., CD

Five songs of slow to mid tempo, pounding, brutal, throaty music that falls somewhere between Emperor and Assuck. (AS)

Sever The Fallen, 8 Lewis St., Phillipsburg, NJ 08865

SHELTER - WHEN 20 SUMMERS PASS, CD

Melodic hardcore done by famous punk rockers turned Hare Krishna. (BJM)

Victory Records, PO Box 146546, Chicago IL 60614

*** SHINER- STARLESS, CD**

See review above.

Owned and Operated Recordings P.O. Box 36 Fort
Collins, CO 80522*

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Mike Yurchisin (MY)

Arguably the sickest most original innovative band ever to exist is the almighty Rudimentary Peni. Shit this band is so fucked a street gang, Peni Death Squad, exists in their honor. Peni has a most distinctive sound (unlike any Punk/hardcore band EVER) that is eerie, creepy usually mid tempo and utterly interesting. Nick (vocals/guitar) sings in a shrieking manner that is most unique. When I first got into Peni the rumor was that, battling throat cancer, the singer had a lung removed. This made perfect sense since the voice is so horror filled and I caught a picture of Nick playing live and he was sitting on a stool. Stories like this just made Peni immortal to me. Another interesting thing is that Peni rarely if ever gave interviews or had pictures taken. I believe they even refused to play live after a handful of shows. The writing of Peni is simply enlightening. They attack serious subjects concerning politics, breaking with social convention, and the nature of angst, insanity, and all other manners of pain. It is tough to describe the lyrics since they are all profound. Oh and the fucking art! All of Peni's records are evil fold out artistic masterpieces. The art appears pencil drawn and consists of quite detailed dreamlike stream of consciousness images of Nick Blinko's inner hell. The art is what you would find a genius artist drawing while he was locked in a mental hospital. This is a good reason to buy the LPs rather than the CDs-You may want to frame this shit. The EPs of RP (CD) and their first full length (Death Church) are absolutely essential to any collection and Cacophony (their second) is damn good.

SHIT THAT RAWKS: Murder City Devils Live, Good Clean Fun/Nerve Agents live, Throwdown CD, Eighteen Visions CD, Fucked Up & Photocopied-Book, Cavity-Laid Insignificant CD, 25 Ta Life-Few The Real CD, Spazz/Subversion CD, Catharsis/Newspeak CD

that either. In all fairness, this is a hit-or-miss album I was hoping to give a really good review for, but it just never gets a good head of steam. The high points are high, but too few and too far between. The sentimental clean guitar strumming and wistful melodies lack the backbone one may desire in a lovely rock song. And yet it's not frail in a beautiful martyr sort of way, it's just frail. A very good recording and some neat art, but you know what they say about a turd: you can't polish it. I guess it's not quite a turd, but still something less than edible. You can taste it if you want, and you should, but take it slow. Don't just gobble it right up and run around telling everyone how wonderful it tastes like you did Cap'n Jazz, you crazy emo you. (RB)

SHINER - STARLESS, CD

It is very refreshing to see a solid record come my way. It seems that every band these days wants to form, get some T-shirts made for the big show and hurry up and put their first 4 songs out on a disc EP. Shiner puts together a very decent rock record in "Starless." Their sound sometimes borders on being a tad commercial, but hopefully Kim Colleta (friend of the band) can boot them away from the majors. Indie land shall probably keep this bands

sound sounding hungry and dirty, and that's when they are at their best. The funny thing is that when the harmonies are going on some of the choruses they kind of sound like a young Alice in Chains. I could have done with out the description of what gear they use in the liner notes. Keep in mind next time that real rockers just plug in whatever and play. These guys are close to having that punky-rocker sound perfected. They do a good job of hitting hard weather they are pumping you up or bringing you down with a mid-tempo tune. Recording some of the record in good ole' Champaign, Illinois was a smart move. The history of Hot Glue Gun and the Poster Children's rock spirits must have been swarming around the studios. This is a good rock band and I hope they can keep it up. (BC)

SUNSHINE - VELVET SUICIDE, CD

This is a three piece band that plays a driving mix of poppy punk and synth new wave. A good amount of keyboard is what adds the new wave element. They also mix in some DJ and dub elements here and there. Maybe we should call this sound "New-new wave." There is not enough info included in the record to tell what country they are from, but the singer sounds British. I definitely hear a Buzzcocks influ-

SLOPPY SECONDS - GARAGE DAYS REGURGITATED E.P., CD

Simple - Sloppy Seconds doing seven covers in the pop punk variety. Covers include: The Fools, Holly and the Italians, Joan Jett, Dee Dee Ramone, Robin Johnson, Alberto y Los Trios Paranoias, and Black Flag. The artwork and concept is made to replicate the Metallica CD of similar name. (EA)

Nitro Records

SMOKING POPES - LIVE, CD

You should already own all of their CDs. If you don't go out and buy their "Destination Failure" CD. It's beautiful and amazing and all of those other good things. Clearly, I'm a fan of the Smoking Popes, but I wouldn't necessarily buy this, because I'm not big on live CDs. If you dig live CDs and the Smoking Popes (which you should!) then this 22 track CD is for you. (ES)

SPEEDBUGGY USA - COWBOYS & ALIENS, CD

Not what I'd expect from an ex NOFX member. Now that I've piqued the interest of 15 year olds everywhere, these guys mix old school country, the Supersuckers and Tom Petty to create some ass kickin', bar brawlin' tunes.

Yeehaw! (NS)

Headhunter Records, www.cargomusic.com

STILLWELL/LAST DITCH EFFORT - SPLIT, CD

Stillwell play discordant indie with touches of early 90's DC, or mid 90's Chicago. I could picture them opening up for Cap'n Jazz and Kerosene 454. Last Ditch Effort are similar, but a little more upbeat. Their vocals are shouted more and the music is a little more hectic. (NS) Forge Again Records, forgeagainrecords@hotmail.com

*** SUNSHINE - VELVET SUICIDE, CD**

See review above.

Day After Records, Horska 20, 352 01 AS, Czech Republic

THEM WRANCH-BIG NOISE FROM EAST MAYNARD CD

This sleazy music seems appropriate for a Russ Meyer film or a 1962 go-go dancing strip club. Decent stuff with a variety of old styles featured (country, Rockabilly, Garage). (MY)

Them Wranche 420 East Maynard Ave Columbus, OH 43202

THREE STIGMATA - S/T, 7"

Morrissey on a bad hair day, with a hangover, trying to be Punk. Obviously talented musicians playing energized but boring, experimental, lo fi indie rock. This is far from catchy. (MY)

Tritone Records, 403 Gary rd Carrboro, NC (no zip)

*** TIARA - AGAIN CAST IN, CD**

See review above.

Anyway Records, PO Box 82444 Columbus, OH 43202

TOILET CREATURES - WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?, CD

Immature, less then demo quality, wanna' be punk rock. Not very good, even the band says so in the liner notes. (DM) Smart Ass Records, PO Box 71 Cottage Grove, MN 55016

TOSSENS / THE ARRIVALS - SPLIT, 7"

The Arrivals play fast pop-punk with vocals like Lee Ving, if Lee Ving sucked at vocals. Pretty standard stuff here. The Tossers play a fast song that sound like punk Irish drinking songs, complete with tin whistle, banjo, and violin and a really out-of-place rock solo. I hope they don't always sound like this. (RE)

Smilin' Bob Records, PO Box 1002 Homewood, IL 60430 - 0002

TOSSENS - LONG DIM ROAD, CD

When I put this disk in, my brother tried to do-see-do me and play the spoons on his knee. Eleven tracks of fast, political, hillbilly style, Irish jig kinda stuff. They use a tin whistle, mandolin, banjo, and more, and although it made me laugh, their hearts seem to be in the right place, and it was definitely creative. (ES)

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Neal Shah (NS)

When you think of Boston, what great bands come to mind? Well, besides Boston. DYS or SSD? Pshaw. Ten Yard Fight or Reach The Sky? Preposterous! Piebald or Converge? Balderdash! The best band to come from Boston, and who will outlive them all is Gang Green! That's right. They were there when it started and they'll be around when the next musical fad hits. Actually, they might be broken up now, but that's beside the point! Gang Green will always have a special place in my liver. Now, some people say that their early stuff was their best, nay, their only good stuff! This is pure Tom Foolery. Others may say that "Another Wasted Night" was their pinnacle. Absolute chicanery. Gang Green was at their best, in my opinion, on their debut full length for Roadrunner, "You Got It." Another Wasted Night is great too, but You Got It features timeless classics that we can all relate to. Surely you'll agree that there indeed is no way out of a haunted house, as they sing in "Haunted House." "L.D.S.B." plainly suggests, hey, let's drink some beer. Why not? "Another Bomb" displayed a glimpse of the political discontent that we all felt, "Liquor store has been closed, all the street people froze, and our government built another bomb." And the epic "Born To Rock" is a proclamation of all that rock stand for: "When the show is over, and all the beer is gone, I'm gonna take you home and make love to you all night long." Honestly, Gang Green is the greatest, most overlooked band ever. Drunken skate rock/thrash/metal at its finest.

Also listening to: Suicidal Tendencies (How Will I Laugh/Lights, Camera), Turning Point discography, Heresy, Jurassic 5, Buzzcocks "Singles Going Steady"

ence. The singer sounds like a pissed-off Pete Shelley, and the band at times shows that pop/punk/rock tightness of the Buzzcocks that makes their songs so great. The production is clean, but the record isn't over-produced. Overall, a solid release. (BJM)

TIARA – AGAIN CAST IN, CD

It's 1:30 am, and I'm pretty sleepy, so maybe Tiara isn't the best thing for me to be listening to because it's definitely sleepy music. The cover depicts a green tinted photograph of a road stretching out for miles. In the distance is a mountain or a hill, which, when turned 90 degrees, somewhat resembles a small, round man's face. I have a split seven inch with this band somewhere. I picked it up in New York because they were sharing a single with a band I like called Silver Scooter. I don't think I ever listened to it. I'm bad like that. Indie rock really isn't the type of music that drives me crazy unless it's done really well. In the case of Tiara's full length, Again Cast In, I'd have to say that it doesn't even come close to falling into a category of music that would even begin to drive me crazy. However it is a pretty good indie pop/rock record. Tiara plays very laid-back music that at times reminds me of Silver Scooter (the vocals) and Elliot Smith

(the guitars, and sometimes the vocals), and at no time does it ever sound like anything new. I'm still drawn to it though, because it's a record I can put on if I feel like taking a nap or having background music on, which is always nice to have. There are some country sounds here, some distorted guitar, some very pretty vocals, and a lot of indie pop. (RE)

TRANS AM – YOU CAN ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT, CD

Inspires such exclamations as "hey, this is the demo on a keyboard I used to have." All kidding aside, if what you want is rockin' keyboard work and semi-techno beats, this is top of the heap. One can tell that a lot of work went into this jewel. But, admittedly, I wouldn't know how much work you need to do to create a synth masterpiece. I can lay down a phat groove for you on Acid Rock 2.0 in about twelve minutes. All of this material was recorded between 1993 and 1998, so I'm rather confused as to what this release is supposed to be. Most of it is culled from old Japanese albums of theirs. It doesn't matter, though. At least it's out for all the crazies to shake their hips to. As an instrumental album, the disc has good movements and really splices things and spreads different attitudes out very well. It rocks on a

Thick Records 409 N. Wolcott Chicago, IL 60622

*** TRANS AM – YOU CAN ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU WANT, CD**

See review above.

Thrill Jockey Box 476794, Chicago, IL 60647

*** UNISON – SUNDAY NEUROSIS, CD**

See review above.

We're In This Alone Records, c/o Milos Stosic / Ustanicka 154 / 11000 Baograd

THE VACANTS – S/T CD

This is a five song "short run" CD of pop punk, a la the Queers. The vocals are nasal and snotty, and the lyrics are about girls and being bored. (BJM)

Mutant Pop Records, 5010 NW Shasta, Corvallis OR 97330

THE VALENTINE KILLERS – S/T, LP

We can now declare the Valentine Killers the king of R-O-C-K, move over Hookers (the band, duh). Ten tracks of absolute motor city style rock and roll from an up and coming band. They have an excellent split with the Loudmouths as well. (EA)

Yeah It's Rock PO Box 85775 Seattle, WA 98145

*** THE VIGILANTES – CITY LIGHTS THAT LEAD****THE WAY, CD**

See review above.

GMM PO Box 15234, Atlanta, GA 30333 USA

VOORHEES- BOOKBURNER, 7 INCH

Scratchy vocals with fuzzy guitars. Angry punk rock from 5 brits. (BC)

THD Records P.O. Box 18661 Mpls, MN 55418

THE WALLYS – CLEAN UP, CDEP

Four pop punk songs in the Mutant Pop style trying to break away from the traditional pop style. The sleeve says this is post Screeching Weasel era pop. This is just barely true. Light vocals over crunchy guitar pop = fun but lacking originality. Not bad. (DM)

Mutant Pop 5010 NW Shasta Corvallis, OR 97330

*** THE WHITE OCTAVE/SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN – SPLIT, 7"**

See review above.

Tritone/records, 403 Gary road, Carrboro, NC

27510

THE WORLD IS MY FUSE - GOOD INTENTIONS,**CD**

They took their name from the Rites of Spring, but they sound more like the Smashing Pumpkins. Slow songs (relatively speaking), with a heavy guitar sound, and a vocalist who sings with a whisper-style similar to that of Billy Corgan. Could probably be classified as emo. (BJM)

Espo Records, PO Box 63, Allston MA 02134

WORLD'S STRONGEST MAN – S/T, CD

Fun EP with an ironic name 'cuz there ain't no machismo in a pop band that sings about sleep problems and love lost. Recommended. (AE)

World's Strongest Man, PO Box 36700, Philadelphia, PA 19107

YAGE - 3-17 OCTOBER 1984, CD

Emo hardcore from Germany with songs sung in English and their native tongue with obligatory slow and heavy parts. Ich habe kein Glück. (AS)

Nova Recordings, Gladbachstr. 44, 50672 Koeln, Germany

V/A-ANGRY RODENT SUMMER COMP CD

Half of this is atmospheric indie elevator muzac (think Paul Newman/Euphone) but there are also some weird surprises thrown in like the classic hip-hop track and some funk/indie/Punk/meta songs. Overall it's pleasant. (MY)

\$8 Angry Rodent Records, PO Box 21 Milford,

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Ryan Batkie (RB)

When asked which record every punk should own, but don't, my answer is glaring: "Entertainment" by Gang of Four. I continually come across those who haven't the foggiest idea what this band accomplished. Which is perfection, of course. Perfection while creating something almost entirely new. They had the same instruments as everyone else, but they were playing music no one could have dreamed of before they came along. Their music wasn't wasteful in a pursuit of something new that isn't even out there, like say a Sonic Youth does. It made perfect sense. It was raw and rhythmic with an edge that only a close listen could explain. The sound was rough and jangled, and delivered with sincerity. It strikes a nerve with anyone who is interested in genuinely good rock music. Was it punk? This band made probably the best two and three note songs ever. With politics more dead-on than the Clash and delivered in a tremendous style and wit lyrically, it seethed with intelligence and intensity. Concise and to the point, "Entertainment" pulled out all the stops. Later albums went on to push boundaries further with different musical styles, but this album has stood the test of time as one of the greatest pieces of art the punk movement has ever spawned. Everyone since who has had true art in their punk has this band to thank for paving the way. (RB)

What got me out of bed: DILLINGER FOUR VERSUS GOD, Deathreat LP, 9 Shocks Terror, new Pinhead Gunpowder records, Void

mellow beat for a long while right after it abruptly cuts off a hectic one with many rhythm shifts. Strategic, you might say. If you just can't get enough Kraftwerk, you might want to try an up-to-date Chi-town version of the masters that adds a Godheadsilo-esque bass and drum to the mix. Moog moguls. Korg kings. Casio Casanovas. No, wait, that last one is me. (RB)

UNISON – SUNDAY NEUROSIS, CD

This is a complete surprise to hear these guys. Fast, aggressive, skate core, but not limited to just that. This is very similar to the band Swiz, which in my opinion is one of the completely underrated hardcore bands of all time. But Unison is a bit more aggro and gritty. The lyrics are fantastic, the listener takes a ride through pain and torment that is presented so perfectly. The poetic style presenting stories about the lack of faith, homelessness, war, or even lost love is only complimented with such a fucking awesome soundtrack. Shouted lyrics, the occasional sing a long, dual vocals, rocking guitars, melodic breakdowns. This band does it all so well. If there was a band that I would have to recommend for someone looking for something fresh, Unison would be the one. Any band that can go from a completely fast old school thrasher of a tune, then play a tune that has more of a typical song structure (build ups, mellow parts, etc.), and both songs completely rock, just plain rule in my book. This is so worth checking out. (DM)

THE VIGILANTES – CITY LIGHTS THAT LEAD THE WAY, CD

I am not a street punk fan by any means, and that should make this review more powerful. I put this in the "listen to later pile", and finally got to it on a 13 hour drive. In a tired genre that is often filled with cookie cutter sounds and lyrics. This one is worth your money. Wow, thanks to The Vigilantes my drive went ten times faster. This is extremely catchy, inspiring songs that make you sing along. These songs are aimed for the youth generation and they made me feel like I was 15 again, singing along to my 7 Seconds records, chanting each chorus. You can hear influences of obvious bands like The Clash or Social Distortion, but after listening carefully to some of the hooks and the way the songs are arranged there is more going on here (I suspect a little pop-punk knowledge?). This is the best of three chord anthem rock that I have heard in a long time, the singer is excellent. His distinct vocals are easy to understand yet have a style, a voice that you will try to imitate as you are singing along. The recording has a perfect balance and a real strong drummer makes the whole disc solid. (EA)

THE WHITE OCTAVE/SORRY ABOUT DRESDEN – SPLIT, 7"

The White Octave stuff has the lo-fi bass sound that works in a prodding rhythm. Good, but lacking something. Almost like a style-less Jesus Lizard. Sorry About Dresden however have a very good thing happening in their songwriting. It's a mello feeling they have, but with the lyrics and delivery it has a sense of urgency in a way. Their stuff moves between straight-ahead good chorus and epic noise parts. The

Maine 04461-0021

V/A – DID SOMEBODY SAY ROCK?!?, 7"

Ambition Mission just completely NAILED Amerikan in Me by the Avengers. That and they just had probably the only good *Maximumrocknroll* interview I've ever read. Solid punk by The Arrivals, Oblivion, and The Mushuganas also. (RB)

Smilin' Bob Records, P.O. Box 1002, Homewood, IL 60430-0002

*** VA- EL DIA DE LOS DIFUNTOS, CD**

See review above.

Hannibal's Records 95, Rte De Florissant 1206 Geneva, Switzerland*

*** V/A - FUCK YOU PUNX VOL. 2, 7"**

See review above.

Blue Moon Recordings, 2075 S University Blvd. #264, Denver, CO 80210

V/A - HOT PINBALL ROCK VOL. 1, CD

After seven years of publication, Multiball magazine, has put out a CD on their new label Extra Ball Records. This first release is a compilation of songs from the singles that come with the magazine (plus a few bonus tracks as well). This is a must have for garage punk fans with bands such as The Dickel Brothers, The Dirlbombs, The Kent 3, White Stripes, and more. (EA)

Extra Ball Records, 40005 Portland, OR 97240

*** V/A - MODERN RADIO PRESENTS VOLUME ONE, 7"**

See review above.

Modern Radio Record Label, P.O. Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408

V/A - PUNK ROCK STRIKE, CD

Pop punk is alive and, well...27 bands for \$1. Bands you may have heard of include River City High, Divit, CoEd, No Use For A Name (live song) and Down By Law (live). Half the songs are unreleased, if that sweetens the deal for you. (NS)

Springman Records P.O. Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015-2043

***VA- RATS IN THE HALLWAY ZINE, CD**

See review above.

V/A - SLIGHTEST INDICATION OF CHANGE, CD

This compilation features songs from: Sunday's best, Sterling Silver, Small Brown Bike, No Knife, The Roots of Orchis, Jejune, Kind of like Spitting, The Casket lottery, Piebald, The Six Parts Seven, The Trans Megetti, and The Jade Shader. (JK)

Slowdance PO box 120548 San Diego CA 92112

V/A - VANCOUVER SPECIAL, CD

Large compilation featuring 24 songs of bands that took place in the Good Jacket shows. Very enjoyable disc, even if one isn't part of the Vancouver scene. Stand out tracks include: Thee Goblins, The Secret Three, Riff Randells, and Radio Berlin. (EA)

Mint Records PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC Canada V6B 3Y6

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REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Russell Etchen (RE)

In junior high, in response to my parent's decree that I could not listen to anything but Christian music, I rebelled and decided to listen to secular music: classic rock and pop. They had listened to it, so why couldn't I? I played my Dad's copies of Cream, Pink Floyd, Steely Dan, and The Beatles tapes so much, that I started to think that there was no other music out there. It wasn't until a friend of mine made me a tape of the first two Dinosaur Jr. albums, "Dinosaur" (1985) and "You're Living All Over Me" (1986?), did I really start to develop any sort of obsession with counter culture, or punk music. To me, the first two Dinosaur Jr. albums summed up what punk was to me. The heavy, depressing bass lines and spooky, alternately poppy and chaotic guitars got me excited about music! J. Mascis was playing classic rock style solos, but so much more sloppy and powerful! J. Mascis and Lou Barlow's vocals seemed awful and hard on the ears but they were still more powerful than anything I had ever heard. "Does it Float", one of the most powerful songs on the first album alternates wildly between a clean, poppy guitar song to what could only be described a physical pain created by guitar, bass, and drums. In fact you could describe both of these albums as physical and emotional pain warped and twisted and turned into music by three amazing musicians, and one complete genius.

Current faves: Le Savy Fav, The Convocation Of, Dillinger Four, Uncle Tupelo, Godspeed You Black Emperor, Modest Mouse "Moon & Antarctica", Rancid "S/T", and the Miles Davis "Bitches Brew Sessions" box set.

REVIEWER SPOTLIGHT: Scott Yahtzee (SY)

When it comes to skate punk, J.F.A., The Adolescents, and T.S.O.L were great but San Francisco's Code Of Honor took it a step up. My first discovery of Code OF Honor was the "Fight Or Die" video that was put on at the end of the Black Flag "TV Party" video that Target Video released. Young and disillusioned, it was straight up San Francisco Reagan Punk. They were political, but didn't make you feel stupid because you couldn't find Indochina on a map. I picked up (through some uncanny piece of luck) the Code Of Honor / Sick Pleasure Split LP through a trade online. All I had to give away were some crappy straight-edge records. This record has treated me right since day one!!! The cover alone is worth framing. A brick wall with three wide skateboards and a Les Paul guitar just propped up against it. What more do you need? The Code of Honor side is awesome and I could not recommend them enough. Sick Pleasure is Code Of Honor with a different singer. They are an added bonus but not as intense or pissed off. Right now I have checked and this record is out of print. It was put out on Subterranean along with their "Beware The Savage Jaw" LP and "What Are We Gonna Do?" 7" DO your best to find them. Someone owns those recordings, why is it all out of print? Fucking frustrating.

These are the albums that I play to death as I wait for something interesting to happen. They are the "latest" Assfactor 4 "Sports" LP , the At The Gates "Slaughter Of The Soul" (Reign In Blood of the 90's?) and the new Isis album "Celestial."

first song in particular is a snappy tune with good sentiment. In the end each band turns in two worthwhile efforts. It's almost like it has an angry then a happy side. The many moods of the independent rockers. (RB)

V/A - EL DIA DE LOS DIFUNTOS, CD

It is a cardinal sin to name all of the bands in only one review for a comp. So here I go on my highway to Hell....Motocross plays it ska-like, Toht bob brings in the melodic punk, B.B.S. Paranoicos gets their punk groove on and No Way is simply hardcore. Falling Sickness is ska, while Jerky turkey is nasty punk. you got your Peacocks playing some rocking punk and your Open close My Eyes hooking you up metal style. did you know that Inward Access is hardcore, and Mass Murderers is also hardcore? Spermicide (the band.. not the gooey stuff that comes with some condoms) is a punk band, Youth Tribe & Bandit Jazz is ska, Looking Up seems to be ska too, and The Bruce Lee Band is melodic punk. Hey, so Body Bag plays some ska and tom Hogan Motors is also playing some ska, and that band Uncommonmenfrommars is just hardcore to the max. So ska is the style that Taste Like Chicken plays, and it also seems to be the way that The Chinkees play their music. Red wings Mosquito Stings likes their ska brand of music, Nahag Shodim is metal rap, while Incured, Prejudice, Invain, and Cwill all play hardcore. The disc will tell you lot more about these bands. For a comp this was a treat. Because we all know most comps just suck. The best part is the artwork of the Mexican toy men in clay. (BC)

V/A - FUCK YOU PUNK VOL. 2, 7"

Judging by the artwork, name, packaging, etc., one would think that this would be some crust punk anarcho uprising comp, but instead it is a more rock and roll, good time experience. Zeke starts us off with a crushing live version of their riff monster classic, "Chiva Knievel", followed by one of their more hardcore offerings that goes unlisted on the sleeve. I don't know why, but I think Zeke rocks. The Eight Bucks Experiment offer up a rocking ode to dope smoking entitled "Marijuana Americana". On side two, there is a live track from John Cougar Concentration Camp, that is raw, fast, and short bringing to mind "Blood" era Dwarves. Never really heard JCCC before, but this was not what I expected. The Confessions close this out with a heavy Thunders influenced track about infatuation called "Fire Cracker Baby". This

is a good, fun time record, which would be great to crank while downing a few cold ones before going out for a night of hellraisin'. (AS)

V/A - MODERN RADIO PRESENTS VOLUME ONE, 7"

Cool four band comp that caught me totally by surprise as I had never heard, read, or seen anything about the four bands on it. First up, Amp 176 takes us on a indie rock/emo ride but set themselves apart by having a chorus and being more upbeat than their contemporaries. The Hidden Chord bust out a nice, scrappy pop song that has some punk flavor similar to the initial Lookout releases or stuff on the MMR Turn it Around comp. The Forty Five's song, "Take Action", while hearing shades of MTX, is a great tune that is actually more comparable to the early eighties British mod scene. "Pomona", by the Selby Tigers, is an organ and guitar driven, peppy new wave number would definitely please Plastic Bertrand fans. Four bands, all different and above average, especially since average is so appallingly low these days, and like I said shockingly surprised. (AS)

V/A - RATS IN THE HALLWAY ZINE, CD

The Gamits, Divit, Bounder, Homeless Wonders and the mighty Naked Raygun all appear on this comp. The zine is called Rats In The Hallway, and this is their 14th issue. The zine is 5,000 copies strong and is written by people from all over the globe. It features many ads and reviews and is full sized. But who really cares about all that when you can hear Naked Raygun play "Treason" on the free CD! Raygun was king of punk in Chicago for a long time. The opening guitar riffs that came out of this band can rank up there with Led Zeppelin's riffs. Sure this isn't a new song by them, but it is Raygun in their finest hour. "Treason" is worth the cover price alone. Once you get into that, you will want to hear all of Naked Raygun's records. And that is a good thing to do. Do it right now, and thank me latter. So this disc also features some Colorado bands that need to be noticed like the Gamits and Homeless Wonders. The over rated and loved Alkaline Trio even appears on the disc too. The disc is well played and the zine is well written. What more do you want you little no good punk? (BC)



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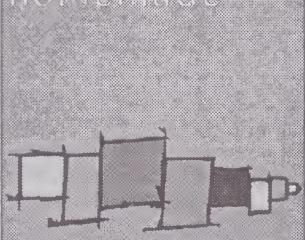
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PAPER ZINES

Agree To Disagree, #8

MMR styled zine, although smaller in size, it still packs a lot of reading material in and may actually have more record reviews. Includes interviews with Trial, The Infiltrators, and Flashlight. Pretty cool. (AS)

POB 56057, 1st Avenue PO, Vancouver, B.C., Canada V5L 5E2

Beneath The Underdog

Excellent poetry/short story/art zine. I'm usually not big on poetry, but this isn't your typical "I'm so sad, no one understands me" kinda junk, but rather, stream of consciousness thoughts that are colorfully worded and thought provoking. I can't really do this justice by trying to describe it, so I suggest sending her a dollar and getting a copy so you can see for yourself. (ES)

\$1 to InSitu Publications #003 2732 SE Belmont Portland, OR 97214

Broken Tapes On The Median, Vol. 1, Issue 2

Strange, strange personal/stories/prose but not necessarily poetry. It's definitely interesting, but made me wish that I had some pot to smoke before reading. (AS)

Poette002@aol.com

Church of Seitan #1

This is the big debut issue. Another zine from San Fran. This one is about the search for good healthy places to eat (with lots of reviews) in New York, Denver, and Toronto to name a few. If you write a review of a place to eat you get a free zine! (BC)

Trixie P.O. Box 410312 San Francisco, CA 94141

CNS #8

CNS stands for Coed Naked Sex and it is 96 pages long with tons of interesting reading. This issue has a very clever choose your own adventures format. After each article you have a choice as to what you would like to do next. Everything is written second person and it so works! John is an Indie Punk Rock kid of about 21 years old. I enjoyed this zine a great deal and although an egomaniac (what Zine editor isn't) John is a good writer. I simply felt that just about every situation Mr. Kim encountered was with \$100 in his pocket and 6 rubbers on his cock. Where is the excitement or dare I say it danger? (MY)

\$2 Columbia University Stn. PO Box 250046 NYC, NY 10025

Cobweb Junction #4

Aiko seems like a smart girl with strong opinions who's not afraid to speak up about them, something I find extremely admirable. She writes about the presidential campaign, and how the candidates are afraid to take a stand on anything, a very descriptive and insightful piece on a trip to the San Francisco Bay Area, a few comics, a commentary on award shows, and prints a series of emails between the editrix and a young depressed girl. Usually that sort of thing bores me, but Aiko's advice to the girl was very well thought out and smart. The only thing I didn't really like was the use of a lot of different fonts [i.e. each story, new font]. That kind of makes my eyes hurt, and it's not very good design, but I'm a font geek myself, so I understand the desire of wanting to display them. (ES)

\$1 P.O. Box 60774 Sacramento, CA 95860-0774

Complete Control #6

A long and rather detailed recounting of what exactly went down in Seattle. Also with a bit of explanation behind what happened to lead up to Seattle. Also includes some Vancouver history and other general leftist topics. This issue definitely concentrates on the northwest U.S. even though the main author is from Richmond. Includes other contributors as well. Well-done and worth the read. (RB)

\$1, PO Box 5021, Richmond, VA 23220

CRAMP zine #5

CRAMP stands for the Chain Ring Ate My Pants. It is 3"X 4" and 8 pages long. Rob has an agenda that appears to be totally anti auto and pro bike. This zine contains a good amount of info (despite its size) on the "Death to the Highway" philosophy which is on the rise in most parts of the country. I bet he spends time keying random cars in his community. Just remember to check the stickers first; we may have more in common than you think. (MY)

2 zines w/stickers for \$1, Rob Kelley, PO Box 1971 Aptos, CA 95001-1971

Decades of Confusion Feed The Insects #26

This full size, 18 page zine has a color cover and a short story about a girl named Lucy and her notebook. It also contains some peculiar "goth" type drawings, a map/board game drawing, and a poem.

I don't really know what else to say about this, except that some of the drawings were almost frighteningly eerie and the poem was written like a spell or something. There were also some God references throughout, and that kind of confused me. (ES)

\$2 to Justin K.H. 224 N. Camac St. Philadelphia, PA 19107

Doris # 15

Subtitled the "DIY Anti-Depression Guide", Cindy is back with another incredible issue of this long running personal / comic zine. Every issue I've read has been incredibly enjoyable, and this is no exception. This issue deals with depression and the many ways you can deal with it. Cindy offers many tips on how to combat depression, through comics and writing, all done in her familiar drawing and writing style. She offers solutions such as what herbs to take, self-pleasure as opposed to sex and relationships, writing down your problems by making lists, and others. Overall, a good read. I'd recommend picking up any issue of Doris you see. (RE)

\$1.50ppd to Cindy PO Box 1734 Ash, NC 28801

Establishment #1 (the virgin issue)

Okay these two kids are in love, so it makes sense that they would write a zine about how much they love each other, right? They say things like "[This zine is] a flow of emotion tactfully solidified into the passionate mass of paper and ink..." They include pictures of their hands and stomach's and feet. They talk about each other a whole lot. And they expect ANYONE but themselves to take this seriously? Come on! Please, make all the kissy faces at each other you want, but please don't print it and don't expect anyone to get anything out of this paper version of a "term of endearment" for one another. Barf. (RE)

PO Box 33 Glen Haven, CO 80532

Fighting Godzilla Fortress of Solitude #14

The writer loves the Peanuts gang and wants pictures of your ex-boyfriends. Many cartoons and personal zine essays. (BC)

\$1.00 plus stamp 449 W Belmont Ave #32, Chicago, IL 60657

Film Gofer's Digest #1

This is an awesome zine. This is all about our narrator's attempts, trials and tribulations of getting into the film business. Read about how he was the Fruit of the Loom Grape Man,

who he drove around from Hollywood, idiots who also try to get into the film business, and other entertaining stories. This is amusing and somewhat neat to find out about something that has interested me and yet lacked any insight on. This zine is entertaining and fun to read. Hopefully the next issue will be as good, if not better. (DM)

\$1, Andrew Dickson, PO Box 12324 Portland, OR 97212

Freedieselradio #1

A very short and schizophrenic attempt at a personal fanzine. Little clips of the author's life, or what they want everyone to see of it. Ramblings of fantasy punk girls of his dreams and just stuff like what temperature the coffee is. The temperature of the coffee should be an accessory to the narrative rather than the substance of the narrative. You can't just tell us she's the most beautiful girl in the world and expect us to know what you're talking about or believe you. (RB)

The Garret County Press Guide to New Orleans

Don't be fooled by the title, this is actually a real travel guide for the lovely metropolis of, you guessed it, New Ar'lens. It's got all the do's and don'ts, the where's and how's, and the strip clubs. If you're visiting New Orleans or are obsessed with it, you'll want to have this handy. Four dollars for 46 old fashioned black & white 60# paper pages? I don't see anything to justify that. It was probably printed instead of photocopied. (RB)

\$4, Garret County Press, 828 Royal St. #248, New Orleans, LA 70116

I Hate This Part of Texas

I really like personal zines that I feel like I can relate to, that I find myself reading and thinking, 'Wow, I'm totally the same way' or 'Yes! That's happened to me too!'. That's how a lot of this zine was for me. From the first story, John writes "I loathe work. It is extremely difficult to convince myself that my time and energy are worth the measly wages that are offered, no matter how broke I am.". I've had these same thoughts running through my head lately, so I definitely understood where he was coming from. He writes about how there always seems to be so much more to learn, a story about hitching a ride with a trucker to Ohio, dumpstering, work, his decision to get a vasectomy, sexuality and how it shouldn't be so taboo, book reviews, train hopping, and more travel stuff. Also comes with an insert called "The Ann Arbor Dishdog News and Reviews" with comics and dishwasher stories. One was about "the Blue Danube" in Columbus, Ohio where I recently ate lunch and am now regretting. Yikes! (ES)

\$2 to Tree of Knowledge P.O. Box 251766 Little Rock, AR 72225

Intox # 4

This is your run-of-the-mill punk/hardcore newsprint zine. It includes your basic columns of endless miles of text. They interview At the Drive In, Jets to Brazil, The Get Up Kids, and Tanger. Then they review some records. It's the final issue so I guess they caught on that these kind of zines don't really matter because there are a few really well done ones that really know what they are doing. Good try though. (RE)

\$1ppd to PO Box 4173 Estes Park, CO 80517

Jesus Come Back #3

This is the traditional style HC zine. Band interviews, reviews and opinions. What I really liked about it that it was done by an old schooler (possibly an old schooler, his age was not revealed). Anyhow, this guy's all into old school stuff and constantly relates back to it in his interviews. Also, some of his opinions have been insulting to some folk's character, especially some at the Jade Tree and Initial labels. Putting his opinions aside, it was comforting to see the focus on smaller and scene based bands instead of national acts. Such featured bands include S. California's Life's Halt, What Happens Next? and Youngblood Records. Also what make's me chuckle and feel old were the posted lyrics to the Bl'ast! 's song "Surf and Destroy" showcased on the back cover. Memories... (DM)

\$2 ppd. 4047 8th Ave. #3 San Diego, CA 92103

Kiss Off #5

Interesting Columbus like book. I hate to use the term Zine when these things are much more like self published books documenting the writer's life. Only problem is that we get no vicarious sexual events not even failed attempts that of course make every zine better. Chris is very restrained in opening up his soul to us. What are you hiding, son? What you do get is a doomed tour diary for his band Mac and The Boys and 14 chapters of about 6 months of his life. It is 48 pages with a heavy paper cover. I am sorry but I want the DIRT and I feel that I was stiffed! (MY)

\$2 to Chris Kiss, 26 Assiniboine Dr. Nepean, Ontario K2E 5R7, Canada

Law of Inertia "Women in Punk!" #7

Its real hard to pull off over 100 pages of a quality zine. Sure you can throw away all the adds, the reviews of music, zines, books, etc. and be left with maybe 50 pages? Law of Inertia has those pages down to a pat. First things first, a theme issue always helps, it gives focus. I didn't think I would be up for a women theme issue, I just always thought that it was sexist in its reverse mechanism (please don't start any fights here). I really don't think I can have an all "Black" or "White" issue and not get a few complaints. Anyways it is great,

this issue has some of my favorite women in punk rock – a few a who I have met before. I guess I didn't realize how many great women in punk rock there is (isn't that a good thing?). You get Kim Coletta, Sarge, Jessica Hopper, Discount, Muffs, and more. Oh yeah, it has all the other zine stuff I mentioned before with some great columns as well. Worth every penny for sure, there is a lot to read and enjoy here. (EA)

\$3 Law of Inertia 206A Dryden Rd, Suite 154 Ithaca, NY 14850

Life In a Bungalo digest #11

Stuff about the WWF, ECW, Homer, and zine reviews. And there is an interview with ALL's Karl Alvarez. (BC)

FREE! PO Box 413 W.O.B. West Orange, NJ 07052

Motion Sickness #9

This is a great theme issue zine this time around. Sure they throw out music and zines reviews and their top 20 albums off the 90's. The catch to this one is that every other aspect is dedicated to punks over 30 (some of us are getting close or are already there ya know!) I want everyone to order this and read interviews with the following people/bands/labels etc.: Probe Zine, Loudmouths, Texas Terri, Suburban Voice, Dischord, Spazz, Slap a Ham, Tilt, Buzzcocks, Down by law and more. It made me feel good about getting older and may let younger kids know its okay to talk to older punks and maybe vice versa. (EA)

PO Box 24277 St. Louis, MO 63130

The Neverday Apparatus #1

The first issue of this zine done by an art teacher in Cincinnati. He deals with issues of racism and censorship in the classroom when one of his students wants to draw a rebel flag into a picture. He gives instructions on making your own paper, B-Movies and more. A good first issue. I'd like to see where this goes. (RE)

Free w/ 2 stamps to Matt Reed 2373 Fairview Ave #1, Cincinnati, OH 45219

New Socialist Vol.4 Issue 5

Political full size newsprint zine, with articles on race and jazz, defending Aboriginal rights, neo colonialism and the first nations, the WTO, sex work and capitalism, Mumia Abu Jamal, Statpal Ram, East Timor, and class politics in the US. (ES)

Box 167, 253 College St. Toronto, ON M5T 1R5

Slave #4

Maybe the best Hardcore (music) zine out there today. Every issue I have read seem vital to the scene. I am not much of a hardcore fan any more and I still really enjoy this zine, and that should tell you something. This issue has the usual great writing, which sets this apart from every other generic HC zine

we receive (there are a lot of them), and the graphics and layout are beautiful. It has the usual zine and music reviews but the interview with punk rock juggler Greg Bennick (singer for Trial) and Rowan Mitchell, Australian Labor organizer make this issue a true gem. (EA)

\$3 ppd. PO Box 10093 Greensboro, NC 27404

Snapshot #6

Starts out with quotes by Ginsberg and Bukowski, followed by thirteen pages of short journal style entries about Jeff's life, all very descriptive and thoughtful, almost soul searching at times, but not in a whiny "my life sucks" kind of way. Just the opposite, actually. Simple yet thoughtful. The next 25 pages are snapshots of streets, cars, people standing along the side of the road. I'm not really sure if these are supposed to go along with the journal entries or not, but they're all very crisp and printed well. The next 10 pages are neat comic-type drawings, followed by 9 more pages of snapshots titled "The Way To Work" with captions about the need to work to earn money, but how working takes away our lives. Very well done. (ES)

\$2 to Jeff LeVine 4856 Kester Ave. Apt #6 Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

Something For Nothing #47

Not a bad little zine. Folded paper in a flip book style. There are a lot of opinions in here. This is pretty much a collection of columns with a few zine and music reviews. I like the presentation of it all. Kind of scattered cut and paste with a lot of background pictures. Topics covered include Christianity, Bike freedom, prejudice, and some guy named Mark who now works in a porn shop to name just a few. This is not a bad effort at all for the price. (DM)

Free/ \$.55 ppd. 516 Third St. N.E. Massillon, OHIO 44646

Standing #3

The best statement I can make about any zine is that I learned from it. I learned quite a bit from this one-man zine dedicated to politics (specifically the Battles in Seattle over WTO). My copy came printed on heavy duty orange paper-it is nicely laid out with over 16 full sized pages. There is a lot of reading and all but one article was great. My only complaint is that the writer appears to be in favor of revolutionary tactics but is quick to dismiss anything that is not pacifistic. Well actually I have another complaint: this guy shows sympathy for the fuzz. I take issue with that since I am of the mind and the opinion that all cops are Pig Bastards that should be shot in the face but maybe I should keep those ideas for the therapist you think? (MY)

\$2 to Standing, 5265 University Way NE #177 Seattle, WA

98105

Starfrosting, Issue 1

Yet another personal, diary type zine that really lets you get to know the editor and glimpses of her life. Enjoyed it. (AS)

P.O. Box 55, Erwinna, PA 18920

Stop Smiling #8

Thick ol' zine that will be hard to identify, no name on the cover just found it small at the footer of each page. Stop Smiling is a slick zine that lives up to the genre. This one has a little too much UFO, Alien stuff for me, but that shouldn't scare you away. The highlights that would still make this worth a purchase alone were the interview with Corey Feldman and the story of the Goblins/Disney 7" fiasco. The interviews in this zine aren't done in Q and A style, but rather a story-line taken from an interview and research. This fresh style made it much more easy and fun to read.

Props! (EA)

\$3.95 PO Box 2038 Darien, IL 60561

The Substitute Chronicles, #4

As stated by the title, this is a handwritten and drawn diary of a substitute teacher's life in the classroom where your subject matter, location, and class change on a daily basis. Interesting and different. (AS)

Bottom "S" Press, 2010 SW 7th Ave., Largo, FL 33770

Throw that Bottle and Let Me Shoot at It

Starts off with an editorial "This is all a lie", then goes into a barrage of fanciful short stories which one would have to then assume are fictional. All in all just someone who wants to be an author, and they went the DIY route. There are a full range of stories here. But mostly it's someone else grappling with life and the lagoon of deep feces they see associated with it. Not bad, but when I pick up a zine I expect something other than what could be seen as a compilation of Creative Writing class assignments. (RB)

\$0.50, 223 Ford CT. Apt. #3, Auburn, AL 36830

Too Much Information #1

How's this for Too Much Information: one of the sweetest delights for this old school Punk Rock chicken hawk is the utter and complete corruption of young girls. This zine takes us into the mind of a very cute, cool, and tender 21-year-old Punk Rock girl. Its 28 pages long and quite well written in a personal anecdotal sort of way. The zine largely revolves around Laura's thoughts and activities in art school rather than boring band interviews or reviews. Total cut and paste layout- overall a good effort. (MY)

\$1 to Laura Dalrymple, Box 915 Hyannis, MA 02601

Twat #2

Now how could you possibly go wrong sending off for a zine called Twat created by a batch of super cool Punk Rock ladies? This zine is the best thing out of my review box so far. This is quite an interesting, intimate look into the secret world of sick women.

Quote of the month: "I knew I should be doing something else with my time, like learning how to cook, or walking the streets for a little extra cash." This digest is 18 pages long with a shot lay out. This zine is recommended for its excellent writing and nicely done cartoons (and an exceptional pencil drawing). I love to see women in the scene that are this open and sex positive. I fell in love with these writers and I am sure that you will too (regardless of your orientation). (MY)

\$1 or 2 stamps to New Twat HQ, 2360 W. Broad St. Athens, GA 30606

Unshaven Chi #2/Get Bent! #6

A nice red, black, and white cover on this nicely drawn comic. Unshaven Chi has stories about a pizza delivery guy and his indecisiveness about whether or not to re-grow his beard, and an interesting piece on mediocrity. The Get Bent! side continues the adventures of Sidney Skalinowicz; Man In Space, "One Sad Day In The Art Studio," and some reviews of other comics. (ES)

Ben T. Steckler POB 7273 York, PA 17404

Urban Guerrilla, #8

Record and zine reviews, mixed with rants, photos and a good interview with Icki Murrmann from Sty zine fame and MMR. Crusty entertainment for all. (AS)

\$1.50 ppd., PMB 419, 1442 A Walnut St., Berkeley, CA 94709

Venus- #6

A great zine that features the best ladies in the punk community. The zine is very informative and well written. It has a good look to it and the pictures are nicely displayed. Some of the females featured are Jen Wood, Rachel Grimes, and the band Le Tigre. (BC)

(\$3.25 to; Amy Shroeder 420 Indiana St. Vallejo, CA 94590)

Void #3

Exploring the mind and exploring the reel-to-reel home recording. This is accompanied by a cassette. Poetry, ramblings, photocopied photos, and beats. If you're bored in Maine maybe you can relate. (RB)

\$1, PO box 21, Milford, me 04461-0021

Send your zine in for review to:

**Punk Planet Reviews
PO Box 6014 East Lansing, MI
438826**

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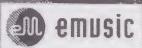


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PAPER BOOKS

Raw Power: Iggy and the Stooges

Mick Rock

Creation Books

1972 was a monumental year here on planet Earth. So much was happening. So much was changing. Heads were left dizzy, reeling at the spinning, as history wrote itself another great hum-dinger.

Nixon visited China.

The Godfather hit theaters.

Pong, the first video game, appeared. "Ceylon" became "Sri Lanka."

And, perhaps the most monumental event of them all: Iggy and the Stooges traveled to England, for their first and only appearance there. It was the band's first show anywhere in over one-and-a-half years. They were primed. They were ready. And photographer Mick Rock was right there with them to capture it all on film.

Raw Power collects, in 160 pages, Iggy and company's British adventure. The pictures document them rehearsing, relaxing, and ultimately performing the now legendary show at La Scala Cinema in King's Cross. This book documents the stuff that facts and myths are made out of.

Rock (who arguably has the greatest name for a music photographer ever) accepted this photo shoot without any monetary compensation. He took the gig for the passion, for his own unadulterated pleasure of capturing images, "freezing shadows and bottling auras," of the musicians whose music he loved so much. "I got my kicks out of aiming my lens," he writes in the moving, if perhaps painfully short, opening. "I had my one camera and two lenses and my red sneakers, and I was flying."

The slight size of the introduction is quickly compensated for by an interview/essay, "The Private World of Iggy Pop," which Rock himself both conducted and wrote in 1972. The four pages of text and stories bristle with energy, resonating with life like feedback on an overly cranked amp. The words and history still sound so sweet:

"Whoever designed [Iggy] must have gotten their wires totally fucked, for this true original should have been nailed in a wooden box or cast to the wind decades ago... But there he was... larger than life and at least twice as fabulous, defying all the odds."

It's only then, after all the introductions have been formally made, that you are invited to review the photographic record of Iggy's musical destruction laid bare. Page after page, in both stunning color, and strikingly stark black-and-white, wearing either his patented silver glittered pants, or his black, Bobcat-backed jacket, kneeling, bent-down, face near the ground, Iggy comes across as a pure punk poet, burning and churning, defining and refining his own personal apocalypse. Showing the audience, Rock, and the rest of the world collectively the recipe for a 200 proof Iggy Pop molotov cocktail.

One of the book's biggest strengths is the random order in which the photos appear. From onstage to backstage, and then back again. The Stooges make their way into quite a few of the photos, but most of the collection is really only Iggy.

Which is, perhaps, exactly how it should be.

High-notes include a half-dozen or so backstage photos that capture the "Trio of Terror" (Pop, Lou Reed, and David Bowie), embraced in friendly arm-locks

and camaraderie. These pictures are stunning. The calm, casual looks the three of them are wearing appear almost unnatural.

Then, when turning the page, and seeing Pop on stage again, you can't help but wonder if the one backstage, the version of the man calm and happy and laughing, may have been some sort of disguise. Or perhaps the apparent duality is simply Iggy.

And that's how most of the book goes. The photos ebb and flow, from intimate backstage gatherings and laughing, to red-eyed (Pop staring directly into the camera's flash,) demon-man.

In a few of the shots, you can see the audience sitting there, silently stunned, wide-eyed at the wild man who has landed before them. You wonder how they could ever stay calm and seated amidst the chaos.

The collection ultimately provides a photographic Pandora's box of Iggy and his band's psyche, as they were standing at a very important musical crossroads. These photos were all taken before Bowie's "(Z)Iggy Stardust" tour, as well as a year before the release of the Stooges' Raw Power album. Four years before he had even recorded the song "Lust for Life," this book makes clear that he was rocking them all his own way—and he was doing it right.

This book will appeal to old-school punks and punk-history buffs alike. Rock's photos are simultaneously sharp, stellar, and sensitive. They speak beyond your eyes, almost allowing you to hear the music in your mind. Raw Power is an amazing portrait of an artist in his prime. It beautifully illustrates, as Rock himself states, "Certain shiny moments in a year that transformed our lives." —Will Tupper

Manhattan Loverboy

Arthur Nersesian
Akashic Books

What's the difference between a *shlemiel* and a *shleymozel*?

One distinction between these two classic Yiddish figures runs as follows: A *shlemiel* is the sort of person whose toast always falls to the floor butter-side down; a *shleymozel* is the sort whose buttered toast always falls butter-side down because he buttered it on both sides.

The difference is between simple pity for consistently bad luck, and a contemptuous pity for hard-earned negative karma.

Arthur Nersesian's *Manhattan Loverboy* is the novel of an American *shleymozel*. Failure in American society is supposed to be tragic, not funny. Think of the irremediable pathos of social failure in that classic Sherwood Anderson story, "The Egg," where a dream of achievement dies hard. What if the same provincial screw-up of Anderson's story got to go to the big city and chase his dream, with the inevitable results? A pomo picaresque novel like *Manhattan Loverboy* would be one possible future outcome.

It's the sort of love story where the hapless protagonist meets the most gorgeous woman of his life, and then weeps and pees copiously into his pants in the middle of Grand Central Station when she addresses him sharply. At such hilarious moments of anti-romance, Arthur Nersesian's writing leaves readers in a fit of laughter. Nersesian possesses the gifts of timing and phrasing necessary to make these comic scenes work.

The story is set in a surreal version of New York City where money shapes all desires—pretty much like the *real* New

York, actually. The comic anti-hero, variously known as Joe Ngm and Joe Aeiou, is a penurious orphan sitting in the road of Manhattan life waiting for a Mack truck to run him over. He lives a rarified academic life as a graduate history student. His crazed Mack truck arrives in the form of Andrew Whitlock, mega-scion of Wall Street, who terminates Aeiou's university fellowship.

The subsequent chain reaction propels Joey Aeiou into the life of a mediocre proofreader when his truest talent is as a champion pornography collector. Aeiou's unfulfillment and barely restrained desires permeate his life, which resists organization towards the fulfillment of desires. Joey's apartment doubles as a personal dumpster, and his life looks about the same. Where the novel asks a question—"Between fun and function, why must we choose the latter?"—we meet in Joey a fellow who would barely recognize functionality.

As a character, Joey is trapped in the central conundrum of consumer capitalism: how can I get a plush life and time to enjoy it, without working too much to enjoy anything? Clueless on this question, Aeiou just masturbates a lot and grazes endlessly off Twinkies. He is a dreamer haunted by his city: "Many of my dreams and revelations come from the margins of the city, places like the subways or bombed-out boarded-up brownstones."

When not threatening, this city's people are poor, ugly and screwed-over: "Their laughs were nowhere near as powerful as their cries. They met their pleasures in perversity." Joey Aeiou is the singularization of this meeting between pleasure and perversity, one who lives off a

vain hope that circumstances will conspire to protect him.

Whitlock, Aeiou's nemesis, lives at the other end of these problems. He has the money, but fills his life with schemes, business meetings and unpalatable macaroni calculated at eleven cents a serving. His mind has been deformed by a life spent in successful pursuit of accumulation, a deformation hinted at by his gargoyle home. Whitlock lacks the capacity to enjoy and lives leashed to his capital. Behind-the-scenes manipulation of Aeiou's life becomes Whitlock's perverse entertainment as a pseudo-paterfamilias. Given the magnificence of Aeiou's capacity to produce public contempt for his incapacities and slovenly comportment, Whitlock indeed pursues a strange humor. Amy, an unsleeping Manhattanite goddess of efficiency and corporate executive power, serves as a shared lust-interest for Aeiou and Whitlock. Just when Nersesian appears to be in the midst of a heavy-handed and predictable resolution to this triadic conflict, the plot begins to weave, turn and reverse.

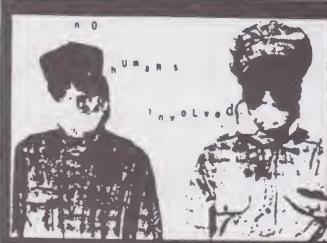
Nersesian has a lush style that lends itself to descriptions that tease a reader's sense of visualization. For example, he describes an aerial view of Manhattan as "that overpacked island, bordered between silver slivers of polluted rivers, a frail vein just waiting to burst like a cerebral hemorrhage, havoc in miniature." Nersesian's easy command of comic imagery is a reader's joy.

If the Manhattan of Money has all the spiritual potential of Beckford's Vathek, Nersesian suggests that we leap over that fate with a *shleymozel's* laugh. Fall flat on our incompetent faces we may, but we shall have the better of it for our laughter. —Joe Lockard



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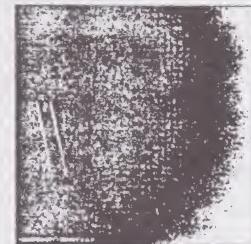
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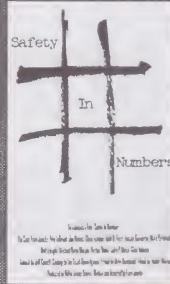
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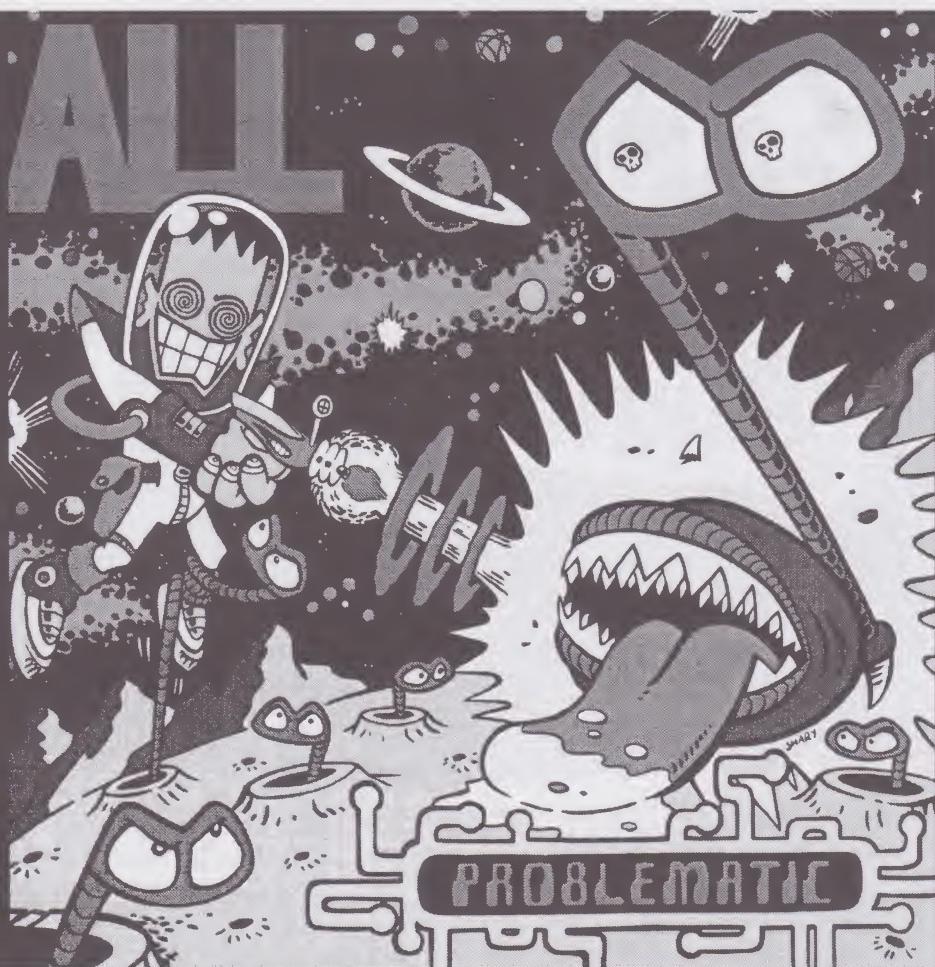
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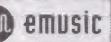
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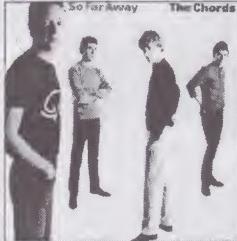


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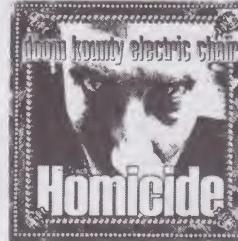
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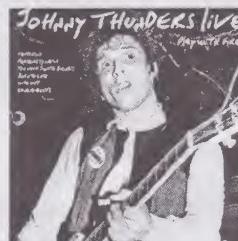
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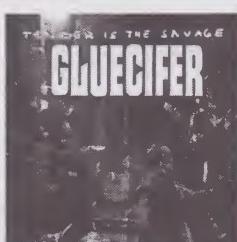
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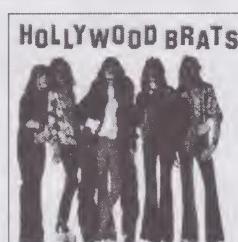
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PP25 THE GROWING GIRL SKATE UNDERGROUND Also in this issue are interviews with SPAZZ, DESOTO RECORDS, The WORLD INFERNO

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PP26 STEVE ALBINI, talks and talks. Also interviewed in PP26: AVAIL, SMART WENT CRAZY, SERVOTRON, POLYVINYL RECORDS, COMPOUND RED and RED MONKEY. Articles include a piece about TOUCH & GO RECORDS' RECENT LAWSUIT WITH THE BUTTHOLE SURFERS, NEEDLE EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, the POLITICS OF WHOLE FOODS and THE TRAGIC DEATH OF GRAFFITI ARTIST TIE. Jam-packed at 156 pages.

PP27 A rare talk with Bikini Kill's KATHLEEN HANNA. Also interviewed in PP27: DISCOUNT, CHROM-TECH, ASSÜCK, the PEECHEES, and PRANK RECORDS' Ken Sanderson. Articles include a look at the GROWING HYSTERIA SURROUNDING TEEN VIOLENCE; BRINGING HUMANITARIAN AID INTO IRAQ; A COLLEGE COURSE BASED ON PUNK and TWO ANTI-RACIST SKINHEADS WERE MURDERED IN LAS VEGAS THIS JULY—Punk Planet investigates. 156 pgs

PP29 checks in with SLEATER-KINNEY. In addition to S-K, PP29 features a talk with KID DYNAMITE, The Metro-shifter's K. SCOTT RICHTER, JESSICA HOPPER, publisher of HIT IT OR QUIT IT ZINE, RAINER MARIA. Articles: Kim Bae brings you aboard as LOS CRUDOS TOURS SOUTH AMERICA. Author Mimi Nguyen takes A PERSONAL LOOK AT VIETNAM—as a homeland, as a war and as a state of mind. Also featured in PP29 is a look at THE USE OF PEPPER SPRAY BY THE POLICE; a FREE BIKE PROGRAM and the GROWING UNREST IN THE KOSOVO REPUBLIC. Plus all the other goodies. 136 pgs.

PP30 THE MURDER OF IRAQ. 18 pages to coverage of the horrible

destruction reaped on the Iraqi people by the US and UN's economic sanctions. Also in this issue: BRATMOBILE, TODAY IS THE DAY, THRILL JOCKEY RECORDS, SEAWEED, WICKED FARLEY'S, VINYL COMMUNICATIONS and BLUETIP. Articles on JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA'S VICTORY IN MINNESOTA; the MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT, a militant group bent on ending gentrification in San Francisco; THE GREEN PARTY IN ARCATA, CALIFORNIA; and a UNION VICTORY IN A NICARAGUAN SWEATSHOP. Plus an expanded DIY section, columns, reviews and much much more. 136 pgs.

PP31 features a talk with FUGAZI and DISCHORD RECORDS frontman IAN MACKAYE. Also interviewed in this issue is THE AVENGERS' PENELOPE HUSTON. Additionally, there are talks with TED LEO, ICU, LIFTER PULLER, and DALEK. Punk Planet #31 also looks at the DEAD KENNEDYS LAWSUIT—this article sheds light on the bizarre situation that has arisen to pit former bandmates against each other. PP31 also takes a look at THE POSSIBLE CLOSING OF GILMAN STREET, MAIL ORDER BRIDES FROM RUSSIA and LIVING WITH CHRONIC CYSTITIS. Plus, columns, reviews, DIY and much much more! 136 pgs.

PP32 takes a personal look at the Kosovo Crisis. A moving, troubling and angering piece, LIFE DURING WARTIME: LETTERS FROM THE KOSOVO CRISIS will not allow you to look at the news the same way. In addition to these gripping letters, PP32 also features an interview with K RECORDS' CALVIN JOHNSON. Also interviewed in PP32 are NEUROSIS, ORI, MURDER CAN BE FUN FANZINE's John Marr; THE ETERNALZ, ASPHODEL RECORDS, SUBMISSION HOLD, and eccentric art mailorder CATCH OF THE DAY MAILORDER. In addition to all these interviews, Punk Planet #32 features articles the COMMUNITY

RADIO MOVEMENT IN WASHINGTON DC; MULTIETHNICITIES IN MODERN CULTURE; and a revealing look at GENTRIFICATION IN TODAY'S URBAN AMERICA. Plus much, much more. 144pgs

PP33 Sept/Oct. 1999 takes a peek at the GROWING HACKTIVIST MOVEMENT. Hacktivism has brought civil disobedience to the Internet. Also in this issue, filmmaker JEM COHEN TALKS ABOUT MAKING "INSTRUMENT", THE FUGAZI DOCUMENTARY. In addition, PP33 features interviews with JADE TREE RECORDS, THE MELVINS, OLD TIME RELIJUN, ALKALINE TRIO AND EUPHONE. Articles in this issue include "Growing Freedom," A LOOK AT A COMMUNITY-BASED FARM IN INNER-CITY WASHINGTON DC; "Ghosts of Tiananmen," AN INSIDER'S LOOK AT TIENANMEN SQUARE 10 YEARS AFTER THE CHINESE UPRISING THERE; "Broken Vows" A COMPELLING ARGUMENT AGAINST MARRAIGE; and "A WITCH HUNT IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO," a gripping look at the government's persecution of Chicago's Puerto Rican community. Plus much more! 144pgs.

PP34 Nov/Dec 1999 takes an in-depth look at THE WARPED TOUR. PP exposes the inner workings and hypocrisy of the so-called "punk rock summer camp." Also in this issue, Punk Planet sits down with WCW WRESTLER VAMPIRO, MANS RUIN RECORDS' KOZIK, SONIC YOUTH'S THURSTON MOORE, THE REPLIKANTS, CADILLACA, OPERATION IVY'S JESSE MICHAELS and PEDRO THE LION. Articles in PP34 include a look at WOMEN IN THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT, a very moving LETTER FROM PALESTINE, the case against GENETICALLY ALTERED FOOD, and a look at DIY PORN ON THE INTERNET. Plus much, much more—except for reviews, which were missing

from this issue. Whoops! But hey, it's still a great read at 136 pgs.

PP35 Jan/Feb 2000 the ALL INTERVIEWS ISSUE. Headlining this special issue is a rare talk with JOE STRUMMER, the frontman of punk legends THE CLASH. Also featured in this issue, is a rare talk with LUNGFISH. Also in the all-interviews issue, talks with THE NEED, AMERICAN STEEL MERGE, the LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER'S DOUG HENWOOD, the MR. T EXPERIENCE's DR. FRANK, the mastermind behind BIG WHEEL RECREATION RECORDS, POSITIVE FORCE DC's MARK ANDERSON and much, much more. 152pgs

PP36 March/April 2000 Punk Planet #36 takes a long, hard look at THE DEATH OF A PUNK IN AMARILLO TEXAS. In this captivating story, Punk Planet writer Chris Ziegler travels to Amarillo, talks to the people involved and writes about the case and its aftermath. Also in PP36 is the story of the WTO PROTESTS in words & pictures. In addition to these two feature stories, PP36 features interviews with MATADOR RECORDS, THE COUP, AK PRESS, DENNIS COOPER, AT THE DRIVE IN, TAPE OP MAGAZINE, LIMPWHRIST and SARGE'S ELIZABETH ELMORE, and many more. Articles in PP36 include moving PORTRAITS FROM IRAQ and a look at the LUTHER PLACE SHELTER, a shelter for homeless women in Washington DC. Plus there are columns, DIY, reviews and much, much more. 144 pgs

PP37 May/June 2000 CRIME AND JUSTICE 2000. In three articles, Punk Planet #37 takes a look at the sorry state of the American criminal justice system. POLICE BRUTALITY is looked at in the article "War in the Streets." YOUTH ORGANIZING AROUND PROPOSITION 21 is investigated in "No Power like the Youth" and the PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX is exposed in "Crisis and Control."

Interviews in this issue include STELLA MARRS; J-CHURCH'S LANCE HAHN; STEPHEN DUNCOMBE, author of ZINES AND THE POLITICS OF ALTERNATIVE CULTURE; the EVOLUTION CONTROL COMMITTEE; Q AND NOT U; EXHUMED FILMS; HORACE PINKER; and the story of STALAG 13, a Philadelphia-based punk club that was shut down by the city, fought to be reopened and won. Finally, PP37 takes a look at the SAD STATE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE and PP takes a peek at the lawsuit between the RECORDING INDUSTRY OF AMERICA and MP3.COM. Plus more. 144 pgs.

PP38 July/August 2000 VOICES OF THE NEW LEFT. PP sits down with a number of the organizations involved in bringing new voices to the streets as well as talking to a couple of people who have been there for quite some time. Interviewed in the "Voices" series are NOAM CHOMSKY, JELLO BIAFRA, DIRECT ACTION NETWORK, RUCKUS SOCIETY, QUEER TO THE LEFT and GLOBAL EXCHANGE. Also interviewed in this issue, BOY SETS FIRE, UNWOUND talk about building their new recording studio, post-hardcore label HYDRAHEAD RECORDS, controversial publisher SOFT SKULL BOOKS, MELVINS bassist Joe Preston talks about his project THE THRONES, electronic artist LESSER checks in and art rockers LES SAVY FAV yap at you. Also, PP38 takes a look at the growing RAPTIVIST movement. Additionally, PP38 looks at the GROWING ANTI-WALMART MOVEMENT. Much more. 156 pgs.

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Henwood is also the author of the books *A New Economy* and *Wall Street* both available from Verso Books:
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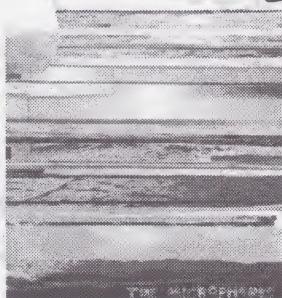
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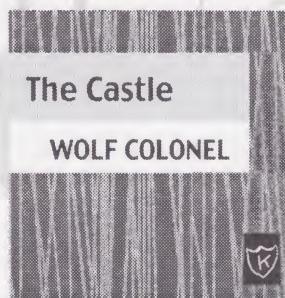
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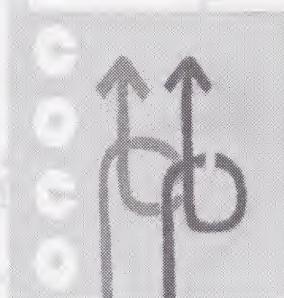
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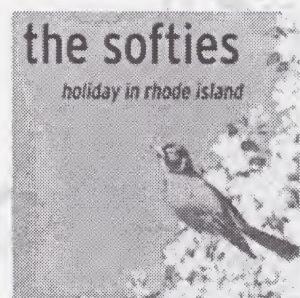


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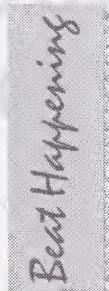
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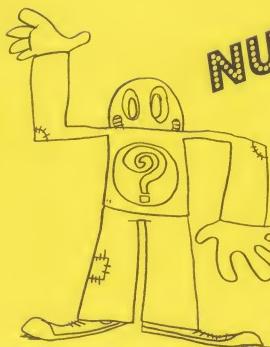
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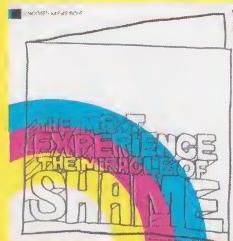


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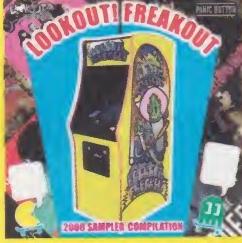


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